A HANDBOOK OF STOICISM

A Handbook of Stoicism

The Stoic View of the World

Aldo Dinucci

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A Handbook of Stoicism: The Stoic View of the World
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Dentro de mim uma estrela
arde no peito e derrama.[1]

[1] "Inside me a star burns in my chest and spills". First verses of the Brazilian song *Balada dos 400 Golpes* [The Ballad of the 400 Strokes], written by Luiz Guedes and Thomas Roth.

Acknowledgments

This book is the result of decades of reflection, begun at the dawn of this century in Petrópolis, Brazil, with my readings of the *Moral Letters to Lucilius* by Seneca, and of the *Enchiridion of Epictetus*. It is the fruit of dialogue with various people over the years, among whom I highlight, in alphabetical order, André Capistrano, Brenner Brunetto, Danilo Patutti, Diogo Luz, Donato Ferrara, Fernando Fontoura, George Felipe, João Leite Ribeiro, Joelson Nascimento, Marcos Balieiro, Marcos Duriez, Marcos Vinícios, Mariana Condé, Renato Pereira Diniz, Vanessa Cordeiro, and Vilmar Prata.

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I dedicate this work to my enlightened friend, Paulo César Gonçalves, who rescued me when I was lost.

Introduction: Stoicism and Stoicisms

Modern Day Revival of Stoic Ideas

Lately, we hear a lot about the Stoics. It is a theme that, so to speak, has come back into "fashion". In the field of psychology, we see a resurgence of Stoicism through REBT (*Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy*), created by psychologist Albert Ellis, which is attracting followers worldwide. In the military field, James Bond Stockdale stands out, a fighter pilot in the US Navy who, taken prisoner in the Vietnam War, used the philosophy of Epictetus to lead the other American prisoners and coordinate their resistance, creating and enforcing a code of conduct among them.[1] There is Stoicism focused on environmental causes, led by names like Kai Whiting, Leonidas Konstantakos, and Will Johncock. There is traditional Stoicism, which follows the original (ancient) Stoicism, with names like the aforementioned Kai Whiting, as well as Chris Fisher, David Fideler, and me. There is modern Stoicism, which tries to update

[1] Known for his famous work *Courage Under Fire: Testing Epictetus's Doctrines in a Laboratory of Human Behavior.*

certain aspects of Stoicism from modern psychology and physics, and which counts on names like Massimo Pigliucci. We also know of a movement called Silicon Valley Stoicism, which focuses on the question of professional performance and resilience, aiming basically to equip entrepreneurs with the conceptual tools with which they can make the most of themselves in terms of productivity and perseverance in the face of the difficulties that arise.

In academic circles, the production of scientific articles and books about Stoicism has multiplied in recent decades, especially after the studies of Pierre Hadot, Michel Foucault, and Anthony Long, who, thanks to the strength of their writings about Hellenists in general, and Stoics in particular, promoted and fostered such research worldwide.

In Brazil, these different views on Stoicism have been spreading with varying degrees of success, and academic studies have gained particular momentum over the last two decades, especially through a pioneering group of researchers focused on Epictetus, which I coordinate.[2]

The Popular View of a Stoic

The Michaelis dictionary records the following secondary meanings for "stoic":

> (1) Individual who shows impassiveness or resignation in the face of misfortune or adversity.

[2] The Epictetus GT, a group of researchers and followers of Epictetian thought, was created in 2019 and is linked to the National Association of Postgraduate Studies in Philosophy (ANPOF). Its formation is due to several achievements of the Brazilian Colloquium on Epictetus: the first occurred in São Cristóvão, SE, in February 2016; the second in 2017, in Niteroi, RJ; the third in 2018 in the city of Porto Alegre, simultaneously at UNISINOS and PUC/RS. Also in 2018, the group's journal was created to publish short articles, reviews, and unpublished experience reports in the area of Stoic philosophy and related fields, in Portuguese, Spanish, English, and French (httww.se Epict). In 2019, the IV Brazilian Colloquium on Epictetus took place in União da Vitória, Paraná. In 2020 and 2021, the I and II Epictetus GT Seminars took place virtually. For more information: https://aldodinucci.blogspot.com/

(2) Individual austere and rigid regarding his values and principles.

Indeed, this last one is the meaning that has culturally crystallized over the last centuries. However, it refers only to the ancient practitioners of Stoicism, who used philosophy both to face the difficulties associated with the human condition and to serve as a moral example to others, especially through the pursuit of harmony between speech and action and by high moral standards regarding character. The fundamental meaning of "(3) follower or student of Stoic philosophy" is often overlooked in the face of (1) and (2), which is why Stoic philosophy seems to many nowadays to be a mere practice of precepts. This confusion has led some uninformed individuals to believe that Stoicism is a kind of anti-philosophy, an anti-intellectual discourse that neither requires nor fosters reflection, that reduces itself to the practice of certain "rules," which, as we will see throughout the next chapters, is completely contrary to the original conception of this philosophical school.

Stoicism as a Philosophy of Life—Then and Now

But let's get to the point: what was Stoicism in Antiquity? How did it relate to what we understand today as a philosophy of life? I'll talk more later about the principles of this philosophy and its main exponents. For now, I want to highlight some points that I consider fundamental about Stoicism.

First of all, Stoicism is a philosophy. This means, above all, a discipline of love (*philos*) for wisdom (*sophia*), wisdom that translates primarily into a contemplative (theoretical) knowledge of nature and humanity. In other words, ancient Greek philosophers saw in philosophical discipline—a movement that would have started in Greece with Thales of Miletus[3]—a way of knowing the world and the human condition.

[3] Thales of Miletus, a physical philosopher (pre-Socratic) who theorized that water is the

This quest for knowledge of the Cosmos presupposed the notion that Nature is rational, that phenomena follow certain natural laws, which can be known by humans, and that this cosmic order is essentially good and beautiful. Hence the very Greek word *kosmos*, which constantly appears in this context, and from which our word cosmetic derived, meaning, among other things, "beautiful order."

So, in consonance with the movement of the physical philosophers (or pre-Socratics), who sought the principles of nature through reason and saw nature as a beautiful and harmonious arrangement, the Stoics perceive the world as essentially harmonic, following some of the principles of the philosophy of Heraclitus of Ephesus[4] and affirming, along with him, that the cosmic element that constitutes all things is fire (in Greek, *pyr*), this being also the intelligence that governs the world (in Greek, *logos*) and the divine principle (in Greek, *theos*) of reality.

The Stoics were also strongly influenced by Socrates,[5] for whom it is necessary for the human, to become master of oneself, to perform self-examination of their beliefs and to scrutinize opinions about the moral principles they take as true, in order to discard false beliefs, purify their soul, and achieve, thereby, happiness, a term which we generally translate as the Greek word *eudaimonia*, which, strictly speaking, could be defined as a state of fullness in which the soul is filled with good divine spirits.

Due to its connection with Socratic philosophy, especially through the thought of one of Socrates's great friends, Antisthenes,[6] Stoicism acquires its reflective character regarding moral principles. What is good and evil? What are the things truly good? How to be virtuous? How to attain happiness? Here are some questions that the Stoics

fundamental element of the Cosmos, lived between c. 624 and 546 BC and is considered by tradition to be the first Western philosopher.

4 Heraclitus of Ephesus lived between 500 and 450 BC.

5 Socrates, the most famous and influential Athenian philosopher, lived between 470 and 399 BC.

6 Antisthenes, philosopher and friend of Socrates and Xenophon who lived between 445 and 365 BC. Xenophon, philosopher and historian who lived between 430 and 354 BC, wrote works about Socrates heavily influenced by Antisthenes, among which is "Memorabilia of Socrates," which in turn directly influenced Diogenes the Cynic and Zeno of Citium.

inherit from Socrates, questions whose answers will constitute the core of Stoic philosophy itself.

The Stoics still receive direct influence from Cynicism through Crates,[7] and indirectly through Diogenes, the Dog.[8] Zeno of Citium had been a student of Crates, who, in turn, had been a student of Diogenes. Cynicism is a philosophy entirely focused on practice (*praxis*), and this inspiration will never abandon Stoicism, whose followers will always seek to harmonize theory with practice, striving to be living embodiments of the principles of their philosophy.

The physics of Heraclitus,[9] the Socratic self-examination, and the Cynic practice fundamentally constitute the main influences in the genesis of Stoic philosophy and its practice. For the ancient Stoics, by seeking through intelligence the principles of reality, are physicists. By carrying out self-examination of moral principles, they are critics of the customs and moral values of their time, so they end up acting politically in defense of some fundamental values, such as political freedom of expression (Roman *libertas*[10] or Greek *parrhesia*[11]). By emphasizing the connection between philosophy and practice, they are philosophers in the ancient sense of the word, which, as Pierre Hadot teaches us, implies a choice and a specific way of life guided by philosophical principles.

In today's world, we see that above all, the practical part of Stoicism has been revived, but in a way that does not correspond to its original doctrine. The multifaceted and complex nature of this philosophy has generated a double confusion nowadays: first, the belief that Stoicism is reduced to a practice, which is false;

7 Crates of Tebas, disciple of Diogenes the Dog, lived between 365 and 285 BC.

8 Diogenes of Sinope, founder of philosophical Cynicism, lived between 404 or 412 and c. 323 BC.

9 According to which all things flow commanded by a Divine and corporeal Intelligence (the *Logos*), which is also the fiery element that constitutes everything.

10 The *libertas* was a Roman institution that granted freedom of expression on political subjects to certain classes such as senators and playwrights.

11 The Greek word *parrhesia* combines the prefix *pan* (meaning "everything") and *rhema* (meaning "word"), so we can literally translate it as "the act of verbalizing everything" or "frankness in speaking." It was originally a prerogative used in the realm of political and moral issues, which guaranteed to those who obtained it safe conduct to speak about pressing issues of the community in which they lived. Later, it came to indicate the quality of a philosopher who speaks on such topics with authority and sincerity. Regarding this, see Foucault (2013).

second, that such a philosophy is impracticable in today's world. Regarding this latter opinion, some argue that this impossibility is due to the fact that the Stoic school developed thousands of years ago and that the cultural structure in which it flourished no longer exists, hence we could only engage in an archaeology of Stoic knowledge, meaning, studying Stoicism academically. This is the position of part of current academic philosophy, against which I would argue that:

(1) There was never a break in tradition, as Stoicism continued to be studied by the Byzantines. The writings of Epictetus, for example, returned to Europe through a Byzantine cardinal named Bessarion,[12] who fled the invasion of the Ottoman Turkish Empire, which ultimately destroyed the Byzantine Empire on May 29, 1453. Bessarion and other fleeing Byzantine intellectuals migrated to Italy, taking with them codices of ancient works that were lost in the West, such as all the writings of Epictetus and other works that had never been heard of, like Byzantine Christian paraphrases of *Epictetus's Manual*.

(2) The very conception of philosophy as theory separated from practice is already, as Hadot notes, an inheritance from the Middle Ages, and need not necessarily be followed by those who dedicate themselves to philosophical studies today.

(3) Other ancient spiritual traditions, such as Buddhism, Christianity, and Taoism, continue to be studied, followed, and practiced today, without any hindrance regarding their practice for being ancient and originating from distant lands.

[12] The Byzantine cardinal Basilio Bessarion lived between January 2, 1403, and November 18, 1472. He converted to Catholicism in 1439 and received the title of cardinal from Pope Eugene VI. Moving to Italy, he took with him a collection of books and manuscripts. His library, which he donated in 1468 to the Senate of Venice, was incorporated into the Marciana Library. He wrote books in defense of Plato and translated works from Greek into Latin, such as Aristotle's *Metaphysics* and Xenophon's *Memorabilia of Socrates*, and entrusted the Italian priest Niccolo Perotti with the task of translating for the first time into Latin the *Enchiridion of Epictetus*.

The Purpose of This Book

Someone could counter-argue: "We will never be able to see Stoicism with the same eyes as an ancient Greek or Roman did and be Stoics in the strict sense that the ancients were." To which I would reply: "Nevertheless, one can practice, follow, or study Stoicism in its various acceptances." For my part, as I said above, I seek to follow traditional Stoicism, because I believe that combining it with contemporary rationality (both from modern physics and philosophy) prevents us from reaching the most important part of this philosophical current: the worldview by which the human reconnects with the divine.[13] This worldview is lost in modern Stoicism, which ends up becoming just another prescription of efficient conduct for those living in liberal societies, reducing itself to individualism.

The aim of this book is to expose, in a succinct manner, the Stoic philosophy in all its complexity, both to the reader seeking deeper understanding and to the one in search of an introduction to the subject, as follows: after a brief theoretical account of the fundamental and historical principles of the most prominent philosophers and teachers, I will present Stoicism based on the three topics of Epictetus's philosophy (the topic of desire, the topic of action, and the topic of assent) to, in the third chapter, guide the reader towards the constitution of their own manual of Stoicism, serving their individual needs, so that they can, in turn, become a philosopher in the Stoic sense of the term: a lover of wisdom who seeks both answers to the human condition and to the world around us, and to act coherently in relation to their own thoughts, with the ultimate goal not only of achieving their fulfillment as a human being, but also of accomplishing something useful and beautiful for the society in which they live.

As I've already mentioned, what moves me to write this work, ultimately, is to convey to you, reader, what I will call Stoic spirituality,

[13] I will return to this subject later when addressing the Stoic worldview.

that is, the particular worldview (cosmovision) of the Stoics who perceive in the natural world a beautiful order and seek to reflect in the soul of the Stoic follower that beauty, making their soul a reflection of the divine order that animates the reality around us. May this book revive Stoic philosophy in your soul, reader, and may your soul, later, when already nurtured by this spirituality, bear fruit and scatter seeds everywhere.

I.
Brief Biographies of the Most Important Stoics of Ancient Times

I looked at life in different epochs through different glasses: first, in the ardor of youth, pleasure, the intoxication of living, curiosity about the world; then, ambition, popularity, the emotion of the scene, the effort and reward of the struggle to make men free (all these were magnifying glasses) . . . later, as a contrast, the nostalgia of our past and the growing seduction of our nature, the withdrawal from the world and the sweetness of home, the tombs of friends and the cradles of children (all these are still prisms); but in farewell to the Creator, I still hope to look at it through Epictetus's glasses, from pure crystal without refraction: admiration and recognition . . .

— Joaquim Nabuco, *Minha formação* [My Formation Years][1]

[1] Translated freely.

Philosophy in Ancient Times

Before starting, it is important to note that, in Greco-Roman Antiquity, there were no universities like those we have today, only philosophical schools where students gathered to attend the classes of philosophers, who were also, in many cases, philosophy professors, and all without any age restriction. Seneca, for example, an already old man, boasted to his friend Lucilius about attending philosophy classes in Rome.[2] Marcus Aurelius, whenever possible, attended the classes of other philosophers.[3] In addition, in Antiquity, teachers were highly honored socially (though not financially) mainly for the crucial role they played as guardians and transmitters of Classical and Hellenistic culture.

The philosophical schools in Antiquity were communities that formed around books.[4] If you lived in those times, you would have the possibility to join several of them. In Athens, for example, you could listen to philosophers (teachers and students) at the Academy founded by Plato,[5] the Lyceum founded by Aristotle,[6] the Gardens of Epicurus,[7] or in the Painted Stoa of Athens,[8] where the Stoics gathered.

You could accompany the activities of several schools at the same time or dedicate yourself, as usually happened, to only one of them by free choice. Thus, bonds of friendship were established not only among the living members of a particular school, but also the living philosophers and, through the founding texts of the school, the already dead.[9] Although each philosophical school

[2] See Seneca, *Moral Letters to Lucilius*, AD 76.

[3] See, for example, Philostratus, *Life of the Illustrious Sophists*, AD 557.

[4] As for that, see *Sloterdijk* (2011).

[5] Plato from Athens was a student of Socrates and lived between 428-427 and 348-347 BC.

[6] Aristotle of Stagira was a student of Plato and lived between 384 and 322 BC.

[7] Epicurus of Samos was the founder of Epicureanism and lived between 341 and 271 or 270 BC.

[8] See ahead more details about this Stoa.

[9] This idea was, in a way, adopted by primitive Christianity, which created communities with strong emotional bonds around its founding writings.

adopted its own fundamental principles regarding the nature of the world and the human being, philosophers were free to interpret these principles in different ways.

In Stoicism, for example, this exercise was frequent, leading to many internal debates, such as the clash of ideas between Posidonius of Rhodes and Chrysippus:[10] Posidonius vigorously criticized the Chrysippean monism, a theory according to which the soul is purely rational, and adopted a model closer to Plato's tripartite conception, for whom the soul is rational, naturally inclined towards reason, but also naturally inclined towards the desire to conquer and be recognized, as well as pleasures in general.[11]

Moreover, debates among the different schools led to the re-elaboration of discourses and theories. This is why we can say that, in Antiquity, philosophical exercise was essentially dialogical, that is, it was born and developed through dialogue among philosophers, neither dispensing with this dialogue nor pretending to place itself beyond this cycle of debate.

The Founder of Stoicism and His First Scholarchs

Stoicism was founded by a Phoenician named **Zeno of Citium**, who lived between 334 and 262 BC. Citium (now Larnaca) was a Phoenician city on the island of Cyprus, located in the Mediterranean, on the coasts of Asia Minor. The Phoenicians were famous merchants, and Zeno, before becoming acquainted with philosophy, dedicated himself to the trade between Mediterranean cities. It was a risky job that involved loading ships and sailing

[10] Further ahead I will provide biographical information about both philosophers in the section dedicated to the main Stoics of Antiquity. It is a "clash of ideas," as Possidonio criticized some conceptions of the long-deceased Crisipo.

[11] See Plato, *Republic*, 6.

to the ports of other cities, often facing the dangers of the Mediterranean, which frequently sank vessels.[12]

This was precisely the case with Zeno: he shipwrecked shortly before arriving in Athens, losing not only his ship but also a valuable cargo of purple, a pigment of very high value in Antiquity[13] produced from various mollusks. After safely landing on the plain of Attica, Zeno began to wander the streets of Athens when he came across a bookstore where he started reading Xenophon's *Memorabilia of Socrates*, a work in which Xenophon[14] immortalized the philosophical conversations of the distinguished Athenian philosopher. Impressed with the reading, he asked the bookseller where he could find men like those represented in the book. Fate would have it that, at that exact moment, a disciple of Diogenes the Cynic was passing: it was the philosopher Crates.[15] Seeing him pass, the bookseller replied, "Follow that man!" And so Zeno did, becoming a disciple not only of Crates but also of other philosophers, who would later bless his shipwreck because thanks to it Zeno found philosophy. "I made a prosperous voyage by shipwrecking," he is said to have replied, according to the account of Diogenes Laertius.[16]

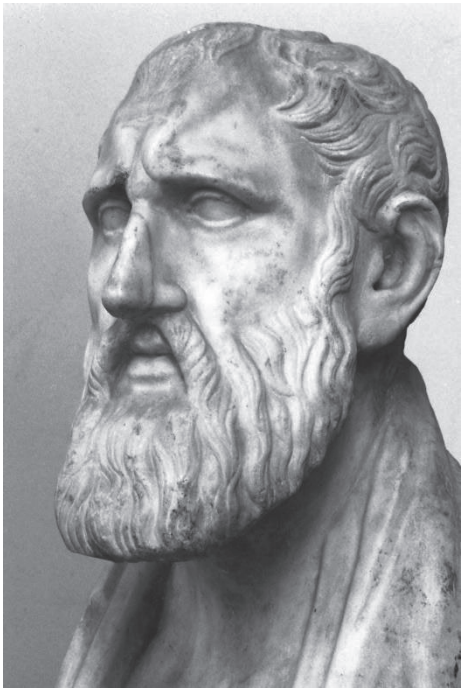
[12] As for the Phoenicians, see Chapter 2 ahead.

[13] Clothes dyed in purple were marks of status and power. In Rome, only the emperor could wear the purple cape with gold embroidery that symbolized power, while the senators wore togas with a purple stripe. See: https://consumoconsciente.blog/2020/05/28/ o-caramujo-a-purpura-e-a-exploracao-de-mares-nunca- navegados/

[14] Xenophon, philosopher and student of Socrates, lived between c. 430 and 354 BC.

[15] Crates of Thebes lived between c. 365 and c. 285 BC.

[16] All quotations from Diogenes Laertius refer to the seventh book of his work *Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers*.



Bust of Zeno of Citium, the founder of Stoicism[17]

After studying philosophy for decades, Zeno formed his own group of friends, who gathered at the Painted Stoa of Athens to debate and converse, becoming known, from then on, as the "Zenonians." This Stoa, a covered colonnade with a wall adorned with paintings by famous artists like Polignoto,[18] among which stands out a representation of the mythical battle between the Athenians and the Amazons, was located a few steps from the agora where the political life of Athens took place before everyone's eyes. This fact serves to illustrate the proximity of Stoicism to politics, which unfolded in various ways throughout history.

[17] Bust of Zeno of Citium, Farnese Collection, Naples. Photo by Paolo Monti, 1969. CC BY-SA 4.0.
[18] Active between 475 and 447 BC, Polignotus is the oldest and most renowned painter of whom we have record in the West. See Plato, *Gorgias*, 448 b, and Ion 533 a.

Today, we can visit the ruins of the Stoa, perhaps savoring a dish of roasted lamb and enjoying a glass of good wine in front of what remains of the place where Zeno gathered with his followers. From the Greek name of this Stoa, *Stoa Poikile*, came the epithet "Stoic" (*stoikos*), which literally means "philosopher of the Stoa," to designate the thinkers of this school of philosophy.

The restored Stoa of Attalus in Athens[19]

From the circle of intellectuals formed around Zeno emerged names such as **Sphaerus of Borysthenes** (c. 285-c. 210 BC), who lived at the court of Ptolemy IV[20]; **Aristo of Chios** (fl. c. 260 BC), a Stoic-Cynic philosopher; and **Cleanthes of Assos** (330-c. 230 BC), who became, after the death of Zeno, the second scholarch[21] of the Stoa.

Given that the Zenonians were a heterogeneous group of philosophers with no defined orthodoxy, Cleanthes was led to seek a conceptual unity for the school, which later led Aristo to be

[19] Photo placed in the public domain by its author, Adam Carr, available at: Https://pt.wikipedia.org/wiki/Estoa#/media/Ficheiro:Stoa_in_Athens.jpg

[20] Ptolemy IV Philopator, fourth sovereign of the Ptolemaic dynasty of Egypt, lived between c. 244 BC and c. 205 BC.

[21] This is the leader of the school.

excluded from the Stoa: he considered that philosophy should be reduced to its moral aspect, which made him, in a way, a cynic. Cleanthes had previously been a boxer and, as a profession, carried water from the springs to the Athenian houses, thus, in terms of social status, he was a man of the people.

The third scholar of the Stoa was **Chrysippus of Soli** (c. 280-c. 208 BC).[22] Prolific writer with about 705 works, of which only a few fragments have passed down to us, Chrysippus defended the doctrines of the Stoa against attacks from the Academic School,[23] constituting the theoretical orthodoxy that would form the basis of the Stoic curriculum. For this reason, Chrysippus is considered the second founder of Stoicism.[24]

Diogenes of Babylon (c. 230-c. 150/140 BC), the fourth scholarch of the Stoa in Athens, was responsible for introducing Stoicism to the Romans. Sent to Rome as part of a delegation[25] along with two other illustrious philosophers of his time, the peripatetic Critolaus[26] and the academic Carneades,[27] he enchanted the Romans with his discourse, who saw in Stoicism a closeness to the original Roman *ethos,*[28] which valued virtue, frugality, perseverance, and austerity. Although partly wary of Greek cultural novelties in which they saw the danger of both foreignness and the weakening of customs, the Romans recognized in the Stoa a philosophy compatible with their ancestral customs and an antidote against the moral laxity of society, which already troubled them at that time.

22 Solis was an ancient port city of Cilicia, whose ruins are located in present-day Turkey.

23 After the death of Plato, the successors of his Academy adopted a form of negative dogmatic skepticism by asserting that it is not possible to have true theories. This position is self-refuting, since it presents itself with a claim to truth precisely by asserting that there is no truth in this domain.

24 Contrary to today's popular imagination, which mistakenly believes in the figure of the Stoic sufferer and grim, Chrysippus, according to Diogenes Laertius, would have died from laughing upon seeing a donkey trying to chew figs.

25 In 155 BC.

26 He lived between c. 200 and 118 BC.

27 Born in Cyrene in 214 BC.

28 That is, morality, way of being, customs.

His student, **Panaetius of Rhodes** (c. 185-c. 110/119 BC), the seventh and last scholarch of the Stoa[29] in Athens, further deepened ties with the Romans, introducing Stoicism among them and becoming friends with influential figures in politics, such as Scipio Aemilianus.[30] This connection between Stoic philosophy and Roman politics would intensify over the coming centuries. Moreover, Panaetius was admired as a philosopher by Cicero,[31] who wrote his work *De Officiis* based on a treatise by the Greek scholarch.

For a few centuries, Athens remained the principal center of philosophical studies in Antiquity. After the fall of Mithridates VI, in 65 BC, the last Greek monarch who dared to confront Rome and ended up being defeated by a triad of Roman generals (Lucullus, Aurelius Cotta, and Pompey),[32] Athens lost its prominence, and the Stoics spread, in diaspora, throughout the ancient world.

Posidonius de Rhodes (c. 135-51 BC), one of the greatest geniuses in the history of humanity and possessor of encyclopedic knowledge, founded his school in his hometown,[33] enjoying the friendship of illustrious Romans, among whom Pompey, who suffered such influence from Posidonius to the point of adopting his conception of justice, uncommon and rare both for their time and for ours, typical not only of the Stoics, but also of Socrates himself. Still regarding justice, Socrates himself, who argued that justice should not be sought through the Law of Talion,[34] inspired the Stoics, so that they were among the first to conceive a notion of justice by which one seeks not simply to punish, but rather rehabilitate

29 The fifth and sixth scholarchs were, respectively, Zeno of Tarsus (fl. 200 BC), a student of Chrysippus, and Antipater of Tarsus, who died in 130/129 BC and was also a teacher of Paneccius.

30 Publius Cornelius Scipio Aemilianus Africanus lived between 185-129 BC. and was twice consul, having become the general who defeated the Carthaginian Hannibal in the Third Punic War.

31 Marco Tullius Cicero, senator, philosopher, lawyer, and Roman intellectual, lived between 106 and 43 BC.

32 Lucius Licinius Lucullus, Roman general and politician, lived between 118 and 56 BC. Marco Aurélio Cota, who died in 73 BC, led the siege of Heraclea, which lasted 2 years. Gnaeus Pompeius Magnus, Roman consul and general, lived between 106 and 48 BC.

33 Rhodes, located on the Greek island of Rhodes, housed one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World: the Colossus of Rhodes.

34 The *Lex talionis* recommends, as justice, "eye for eye and tooth for tooth."

the offender in order to make him fit again for life in society. Enlightened by Posidonius, Pompey applied this idea of justice to pirates he had captured, contrary to the usual Roman procedure of simply crucifying them.[35]

After Posidonius, we have Stoics intensely involved with Roman politics who, among other things, defended the *libertas*, a Roman institution that guaranteed senators, writers, and theater personnel the freedom to criticize Roman politics and politicians.

Cato de Utica (Louvre, Paris)[36]

35 I owe these observations to my friend Eduardo Boechat.

36 Public domain photo (https://pt.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cat%C3%A30,_o_Jovem#/media/Ficheiro:Cato_Utica_Louvre_LP2090.jpg)

Cato of Utica, or Cato the Younger, was a Roman senator who lived between 95 and 46 BC, dedicating himself to the study and practice of Stoicism.[37] He became famous for his defense of the Roman Republic against the dictatorial pretensions of Julius Caesar, committing suicide when he realized that the latter's victory was inevitable, and that the Republic would collapse.

Later Stoics

Of the ancient Stoics mentioned so far, only a few fragments have passed down to us, assembled for the first time by the scholar Von Arnim in the monumental work *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta* [Fragments of the ancient Stoics] in the 1903 edition. The first to transmit a substantial work to us dates back to the imperial period: Arius Didymus of Alexandria (fl. 1st century AD). From the philosopher and teacher of Caesar Augustus[38]—who, by the way, after defeating Marcus Antonius[39] and Cleopatra,[40] spared a city in defeated Egypt because it was the birthplace of his esteemed master—we still have access to almost complete treatises, among which is an epitome on the principles of Stoic ethics.

After Arius, one of the most well-known names and exponents both of Stoic philosophy and of drama nowadays stands out: **Lucius Annaeus Seneca** (c. 4 BC-65 AD). A Roman senator, philosopher, orator, and playwright, this multifaceted and brilliant man has left

37 Today, the term "philosopher" is normally reserved for university academics who write scientific texts according to certain rules. In antiquity, the term applied to both those who taught in their school of philosophy and those who studied or simply practiced philosophy. Furthermore, philosophers did not necessarily write books: Epictetus (55-135 AD) never wrote a book, this task falling to his student Flavius Arrianus. Similarly, Socrates wrote nothing, with his students Plato and Xenophon doing so.

38 The Roman emperor Julius Caesar Octavian Augustus was born on September 23, 63 BC, and died on August 19, AD 14, ruling Rome from 27 BC until his death.

39 Roman general who lived between 83 and 30 BC. Defeated by Octavian at the Battle of Actium, on September 2, 31 BC, he committed suicide shortly thereafter along with Cleopatra, who had joined him as his wife and also as an ally in the Civil War against Gaius Octavius (later Octavian Augustus).

40 Cleopatra VII Philopator lived between 69 BC and August 10/12, 30 BC.

us a voluminous body of work that has survived practically intact. Born in 4 BC in Cordoba, Spain, he was exiled in 41 and, upon his return in 49, was entrusted by Agrippina[41] with the tutoring[42] of the young Nero.[43] Although in his early years he governed well and was loved by the people, Nero gradually turned against those close to him, and his name would later be associated with tyranny after condemning to death his own mother as well as his tutor Seneca. Accused of alleged participation in the Pisonian conspiracy,[44] Seneca served his sentence and saw suicide as an attempt to escape the same anguish that invades his tragedies: first, with a potion concocted of hemlock; then, realizing that the drug had already lost its effect, by cutting his own wrists in front of his friends and servants.[45] Critical of his people's religious rites, which he considered superstitious, he ordered that his funeral services be conducted without any reference to religion.[46]

The generation following Seneca devoted themselves to the collective defense of *libertas* and peaceful opposition to the tyrant emperors Nero, Vespasian, and Domitian.[47] Associated with this movement, known as Stoic Opposition or Philosophical Opposition,

41 Agripina the Younger, wife of Emperor Claudius and mother of Nero.

42 In Roman aristocracy, basic education was entrusted to tutors, who individually transmitted not only their own knowledge but also their own values (such as honor, justice, patriotism, spirit of sacrifice, self-control, and honesty).

43 Nero Claudius Caesar Augustus Germanicus lived from December 15, AD 37, to June 9, AD 68. As emperor, he ruled from October 13, AD 54, until his death, which occurred by suicide after being declared an enemy of Rome by the Senate.

44 Gaius Calpurnius Piso, a Roman senator who lived in the 1st century, was the main instigator of the so-called Pisonian Conspiracy against Nero. On April 19, AD 65, the freedman Milico betrayed Piso, denouncing him to the emperor. Nineteen conspirators were sentenced to death and another thirteen were exiled. Piso received and carried out the order to commit suicide.

45 See Tacitus, *Annals*, xv. 60-64.

46 Despite often being criticized for his stance, which, to some extent, contradicted what he himself preached, Seneca always remained in consonance with the Socratic profession of ignorance, declaring: "I am not wise, nor will I ever be. It is enough for me to remove some of my vices daily and to criticize my errors."

47 The Flavian emperors ruled Rome between 69 and 96, and they are: Vespasian (69-79) and his sons Titus (79-81) and Domitian (81-96). After Galba and Otho, Vitellius became emperor in 69. However, some legions declared Vespasian emperor. Victorious in the second Battle of Bedriacum, the Flavian forces entered Rome on December 20 of the same year, and Vespasian was legitimized as emperor by the Senate the next day.

was **Gaius Musonius Rufus** (30-100 AD), a Roman philosopher of Etruscan origin who became famous for his political interventions in Rome. Exiled three times, on December 20, AD 69, he performed a remarkable act: when the troops of Marcus Antonius Primus, general during Vespasian's reign, and the armies were about to invade Rome, he addressed the soldiers, calling for peace. Hostilely received by the military, Musonius was removed from the scene by the less agitated ones, who feared for his life.[48] In one of his exiles, he was sent to the inhospitable Greek island of Gyaros,[49] north of the Cyclades archipelago.[50] Contrary to all expectations of his enemies, he thrived in those lands, attracting followers who came in boats to listen to his diatribes.[51] From Musonius, we have only a few discourses, as well as testimonies and fragments, one of which is of enormous importance: he was the teacher of Epictetus of Hierapolis.

Epictetus was born in Hierapolis, in Phrygia, between 50 and 55 AD, son of a slave, and being himself a slave, received the name "acquired" (in Greek, *Epíktētos*), commonly used in antiquity. He lived most of his life in Rome in the service of Epaphroditus. This freed slave who had helped his master, Nero, to commit suicide after being declared an enemy of Rome,[52] allowed and directed Epictetus to study with Musonius. Once he acquired his freedom, Epictetus led a simple and humble life. Despite being lame, a

48 Tacitus, *Histories*, iii, 81.

49 Place used as a destination for exile since Antiquity.

50 Set of islands in the northern Aegean Sea whose name indicates that they form a circle around the sacred island of Delos.

51 "Diatribe" designates a type of moral exhortation carried out with the aid of certain figures of rhetoric.

52 Epaphroditus, secretary (responsible for receiving petitions) of Nero, according to Suetonius, or Nero's bodyguard, according to the Suda. Epaphroditus, whom Epictetus refers to negatively several times in the Diatribes, helped Nero to kill himself when he was declared an enemy of Rome by the Senate in 68, for which he himself was later condemned to death by Domitian. The divergence regarding Epaphroditus' function in Nero's court can be elucidated by the fact that he was indeed a secretary at the beginning of his career, later being, as a reward for having assisted Nero in the episode of the Piso conspiracy, entrusted with the personal security of the emperor, which would explain his presence in his final moments. Moreover, some historians believe him to be the same Epaphroditus to whom Flavius Josephus dedicated his writings.

deficiency probably caused by the violence of Epaphroditus, he began to deliver philosophical diatribes through the streets of Rome until he received a violent punch in the face from a former Roman consul.[53] Although he enjoyed some fame,[54] he was expelled between 89 and 94 AD by Domitian along with all the philosophers and astrologers of the Eternal City, being then forced to retire to Nicopolis,[55] where he founded his own school of philosophy, to which young people from the elite of the Empire were sent. Despite this connection with the highest echelons, the philosopher always remained in contact with humble people, as evidenced by the fact that, when old, he adopted a boy who was abandoned by a friend in extreme poverty.[56] He lived, both in Rome and in Nicopolis, in a frugal and austere manner: as he himself tells us, one night he heard noises coming from the downstairs of his house. Going down to see what it was, he realized that someone had entered and stolen an ordinary iron lamp, an object of then negligible value, which served to illuminate his *Lares* gods' altar.[57] Impressed that someone would bother to steal such a worthless object, he replaced it with an even more ordinary one: a clay lamp.[58]

Like Socrates, Epictetus never wrote anything. What has come to us from him is the work of his student Lucius Flavius Arrianus Xenophon of Nicomedia (c. 92-175 AD), a Greek with Roman citizenship who reached high positions in the administration of the Empire, becoming consul and having been appointed to govern in Cappadocia, where, leading two Roman legions, he repelled the attack of the Alans,[59] who threatened the borders. Flavius compiled Epictetus's lectures into eight books, of which four have survived

53 Epictetus, *Discourses*, 2.12.17 ss.

54 Epithet that was first attributed to Rome by the poet Tibullus (55-19 BC), who called it *Urbs Aeterna* [Eternal City].

55 City created by Caesar Augustus in celebration of his victory in the Civil War.

56 Simplicio, *Comment on Epictetus' Enchiridion*, 44.77.80.

57 Lararium (*lararium*), altar in Roman houses dedicated to the *Lares* gods, protectors of the home.

58 Epictetus, *Discourses*, 1.18.15; 1.29.21.

59 People of Iranian origin who had settled between the Don River and the Caspian Sea, in the northeast of the Caucasus.

(*Epictetus's Discourses*), and composed *Epictetus's Handbook*, his synthesis of the master's thought. These works became famous, and Marcus Aurelius was presented with an edition of *Epictetus's Discourses* by one of his philosophy teachers, the Stoic philosopher Junius Rusticus (c. 100-c. 170 AD).

Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, born on April 26, AD 121, was the emperor of Rome from 161 until his death on March 17, AD 180, and is considered the last great name of Stoicism in Antiquity. He was noticed from a young age by Emperor Hadrian,[60] who ensured that his successor, Antoninus Pius,[61] adopted him, aiming for his ascension to the position of emperor. Marcus Aurelius received a meticulous classical education: from the age of twelve, he studied Greek and Latin literature, rhetoric, sciences, arts, and philosophy, being instructed on Stoicism, Platonism, and Aristotelianism. His tutors, mostly prominent figures in Roman politics, prepared him for a far from easy task: governing the Empire. He spent almost half of his life as emperor, defending Rome's borders on the Danube against a confederation of Germanic and other peoples in a long and bloody war.

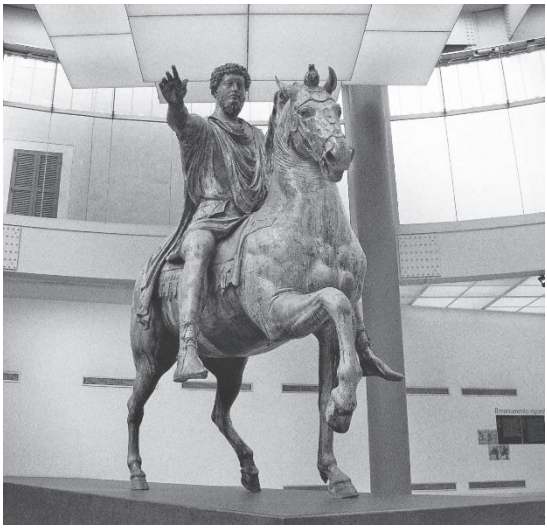
Meanwhile, in Rome, an epidemic of smallpox spread. This epidemic would cross the Empire of Marcus Aurelius, undermining not only Rome's forces and the war effort against external enemies, but also the life of its emperor: he would end up succumbing to smallpox in a military camp on the borders of the Empire.[62]

[60] The Roman Emperor Publius Aelius Hadrianus, of the Antonine dynasty, lived between January 24, AD 76, and July 10, AD 138, and reigned from 117 until his death.

[61] The Roman emperor Antoninus Pius lived between September 19, AD 86 and March 7, AD 161, and ruled Rome from 138 until his death.

[62] In March of 180, Marcus Aurelius fell ill in his camp in Vindobona, present-day Vienna, during the Second Marcomannic War. Realizing that he was developing the same symptoms outlined by Galen for the Antonine Plague, Marcus Aurelius concluded that his end was near. He then summoned his son Commodus, urging that the war be carried to its conclusion (which Commodus did not fulfill), but at the same time avoided close contact with his son, knowing that the plague was contagious (McLynn, 2010, p. 418). Marcus Aurelius decided to hasten his death by imposing a fast upon himself. Seeing his friends and officers weeping, he told them to set aside this attitude and to remember the plague as a whole and death in general (Historia Augusta, 28.2-7). Marcus Aurelius passed away on March 17th, AD 180. According to Commodus, the philosopher-emperor, shortly

After Marcus Aurelius, there were no more great names of Stoicism in Antiquity. The Roman Empire split into two: the Western Empire and the Eastern Empire, or Byzantine Empire. The Western Roman Empire effectively and legally ended on August 23, AD 476, when Odoacer[63] deposed Romulus Augustulus[64] (a child emperor, whose first name is the same as that of the founder of Rome) and proclaimed himself king, sending the imperial scepter and the purple mantle, symbols of the Empire, to Byzantium, saying there was no longer any need for them in the West.



Statue equestrian of Marcus Aurelius[65]

While the West plunged into the Middle Ages, in Byzantium, as noted above, Stoicism continued to be studied. Many Christian paraphrases of *Epictetus's Handbook* were made, and several works

before dying, gave the watchword of the day, which was: "Depart to the rising sun, for I am now setting" (Dio Cassius, 71.33-4).

63 From probable Scirian origin (Germanic tribe from Eastern Europe), Flavius Odoacer lived between c. 433 and 493, becoming the first king of Italy, ruling it between 476 and 493.

64 Traditionally considered the last Roman emperor of the West, Flavius Romulus Augustus lived between c. 460 and 476. He was known as Augustulus (literally, "little augustus") and reigned from October 31, AD 475, until July 4, AD 476.

65 Capitoline Museum, Rome.

from Antiquity, then lost in the West, were preserved, cultural treasures that returned to Europe after the fall of Byzantium in 1453. Byzantine intellectuals, arriving in Europe and sharing with the Italians the codices written in Greek, ended up being crucial for the Italian Renaissance. From then on, the works of the Stoics were first translated from Greek into Latin and subsequently into modern languages, never ceasing to arouse humanity's interest. Being a philosophy that deals with universal questions concerning the human condition, Stoicism is still a living word, fresh nourishment for human souls thirsty for the light of knowledge and Stoic cosmopolitanism, which harmonizes the human with Nature, something more than necessary for humanity today. When asked about the character of Stoicism as an ancient philosophy, I respond that it is, in fact, a philosophy for the future of humanity. One of its main premises, which is the recognition of the brotherhood of all humans, is still an ideal that few on Earth understand and even fewer embody. May Stoicism help humanity in building a better future for all.

2.
History of Stoic Philosophy

It is a good thing, even for someone who is aging,
to acquire knowledge.
— Marcus Aurelius[1]

Who Were the Stoics

Stoicism was born from a fortuitous encounter between Europe and Africa, brought about by the shipwreck of the Phoenician Zeno of Citium on the shores of Athens. The proximity to the sea contributed to the Phoenician civilization becoming a people of excellent sailors and merchants with many cities on the African coasts of the Mediterranean. At the time of Zeno, they had twenty-five Phoenician city-states, among which stood out Byblos (famous for the production of books from papyrus), Sidon, and Tyre (the most important of them). Citium was the main Phoenician colony on the island of Cyprus, the mythical homeland of Aphrodite.

[1] According to Philostratus, *Life of the Sophists*, 557.

"Phoenicians," as the Greeks called these merchants and their people because of the purple pigment they traded (*phoinikes*, in Greek) and which made them famous: it was precisely a load of this pigment that Zeno was bringing to Athens when he shipwrecked. In the Bible, they are called Canaanites, that is, inhabitants of Canaan, the current territory of Israel. The most recent genetic studies conducted with skeletons of ancient Canaanites clarify the origin and destiny of this people: they are the result of the union between immigrants from the Caucasus and local indigenous peoples, forming a nation that "dominated the region between Egypt and Mesopotamia during the Bronze Age, approximately between 3500 BC and 1200 BC."[2]

When Zeno arrived in Athens, philosophy had already been developing throughout Greece for centuries, with names like Thales of Miletus, Pythagoras of Samos,[3] and Heraclitus of Ephesus, in addition to Plato and Aristotle. At that time, a philosopher was a scientist in the sense of someone who sought to explain the real through reason, offering theories about how the world came to be (cosmogony), the fundamental components of the world (cosmology and physics), and the role of humans in the world (ethics).

Furthermore, from Socrates onwards, philosophy becomes also an exercise of self-examination of individual beliefs and criticism of customs. For Socrates, a human being cannot live with dignity without this scrutiny of beliefs. The father of philosophy saw as prisoners those humans who followed uncritically the opinions of the majority, without ever questioning what justice, good, and evil really are. In Antiquity, prisoners of war (*andrapoda*) arrived in

[2] See Andrew Lawler. "DNA from the Bible's Canaanites lives on in modern Arabs and Jews," May 28, 2020, available at https://www.nationalgeographic.com/premium/article/dna-from-biblical-canaanites-lives-modern-arabs-jews. It was also possible to determine their modern descent: it was discovered that present-day Lebanese share almost 90% of the genes of the ancient Canaanites. From this we can get an idea of who Zeno was: the result of an intercultural experience between Caucasians and indigenous people from Canaan who, in turn, founded a philosophy of interculturality par excellence, uniting, through thought, East and West.

[3] Pythagoras of Samos lived between c. 570 and c. 495 BC. His theory of numbers as elements of all things would be of extreme influence.

cities in long Indian file lines with their hands and feet chained, and that's how Socrates considered those who followed the customs of the majority without reflection.

Many of Socrates's friends and students followed this philosopher-act, which has no equivalent in contemporary times, because the Socratic way of life not only involves criticizing the opinions of the majority, but also evaluating these opinions to the extent that they are assented to by the individual (self-examination) and living according to these reflections, thus resulting in an art of living, a way of life. The connection of Zeno with Crates of Thebes, a disciple of Diogenes of Sinope, emphasized the practical vocation of Stoic philosophy.

The Stoics, therefore, were primarily intellectuals who investigated the Cosmos with reason, seeking to live in accordance with these reflections. They are, in this sense, legitimate philosophers of the Socratic lineage. Not by chance, many of the scholars of Stoicism in Antiquity were prominent scientists and intellectuals of their time, among whom we can highlight:

- **Eratosthenes of Cyrene** (fl. 225 BC), head of the Library of Alexandria and the first human to measure the circumference of the Earth.
- **Crates of Mallus**, Greek grammarian and Stoic from the 2nd century BC.
- The logicians **Crisippus of Soli** (c. 280-c. 208 BC), who developed a logical system similar to modern propositional logic; **Antipater of Tarsus**, who died in 130/129 BC and was the first human in the West to conceive syllogisms from a single premise; **Diocles of Magnesia** (c. 1-2 BC); **Crinis** (uncertain flourishing) and **Diodotus** (BC-59 AD), friend and private teacher of Cicero.
- Astronomers **Geminus of Rhodes** (c. 10 BC-60 AD), who had a lunar crater named in his honor, and **Cleomedes** (fl. uncertain), from whom we have a treatise on astronomy.

- **Posidonius**, a polymath who, like an anthropologist of antiquity, traveled through various countries, studying their customs; as an oceanographer, he investigated, in Hispania, the movement of the tides, noticing that they were higher than in the Mediterranean and attributing such fact to the influence of the Moon; as a geographer, he wrote a treaty about the Celtic territory.[4]
- **Seneca**, who wrote a treaty summarizing the physics of his time (*Natural Questions*) and, as a playwright, several tragedies that have reached us.
- **Flavius Arrian**, historian of Ancient Rome who also transcribed Epictetus's lectures and composed the *Manual of Epictetus*.

Apart from these, many others stood out for their virtuous lives and determination to apply their knowledge to daily life, for example, Cleanthes, Musonius Rufus, Epictetus, and Marcus Aurelius, among others.

The Three Parts of Stoic Philosophy

The connection between theory and practice in Stoicism is reflected in its organic conception of the parts of philosophy. As Diogenes Laertius informs us,[5] the idea that spread most among the Stoics is that of a philosophy with three organically interconnected parts: first, *physics*; second, *logic*; third, *ethics*. These three areas make up the same reality, which is illustrated by them as an orchard, of which the fence is logic; the trees, physics; and the fruits, ethics. They also use the image of an animal, of which the bones and tendons are logic; the flesh, physics; and the soul, ethics.[6]

4 Which is now lost.

5 *Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers*, vii..

6 Posidonius inverts the position of these last two fields, making ethics the flesh and physics the soul of the animal.

Physics tells us what the world is and how it formed. For the Stoics, as we will see in more detail ahead, the world and the human soul are essentially corporeal. Logic teaches us both to organize our discourse about the world through classifications and cogent demonstrations,[7] as well as to defend ourselves from sophistries[8] and false appearances through its study and detection. Ethics, finally, shows us, in each case and for each one, what is the appropriate action to undertake and how we can harmonize with our inner nature, in particular, and with nature, in general, aware that we are an important part of the latter. In other words, physics tells us what nature is, logic explains how we can acquire and organize this knowledge, and ethics teaches us to follow nature,[9] the classic motto whose unfoldings guided both the internal debates of the members of the Stoa and discussions with other schools, which proposed criticisms and questions on this point.

By the way, it's worth remembering also that ancient philosophical knowledge is intrinsically constituted in a dialogical manner, that is, it is obtained through dialogue and always questioned through the same dialogue, which followed certain logical rules tacitly approved by the philosophical community. As we anticipated above, this means that, although each school had its own principles[10] to which one had to adhere to enter them, such principles admitted various interpretations,[11] which led to intense debates within the schools. This is why we should not expect total unity in Stoic discourse, as some scholars mistakenly believe. In fact, Stoic thought is characterized by a complexity that reflects a debate spanning five centuries through Antiquity.

7 That is: formally valid and with true premises and conclusion.

8 False arguments that seem true.

9 About this motto, see more ahead.

10 The *dogmata*, which we translate here from Greek as principles, are often mistakenly translated as dogmas, a term that has a religious and rigid character for us, which does not correspond to the meaning of the Greek word that we intend to translate in the scope of Stoicism.

11 As we will exemplify ahead in the case of the maxim "follow Nature," which means following both Nature as a whole and the individual nature that belongs to each one of us.

Contrary to those who reduce Stoicism to a superficial collection of mottos, the aim of this philosophy is to create an inner discourse capable of replacing that of common sense, unreflective and uncritical. To this end, the Stoic discourse is first and foremost vast and comprehensive, aiming to reach every aspect of human life; and secondly, problematizing, not reducing itself to a series of supposed dogmatic truths in the manner of current theologies and ideologies, but consisting of theses defended by arguments, which, in turn, are criticized and replicated in an incessant dialectical exercise. The Stoic is also, therefore, a scientist in the sense of someone who constantly questions their own theoretical principles, never considering this work concluded. Proof of this is that the suspension of judgment, so characteristic of scientific investigation, arose precisely in the Stoa.[12]

The following pages present in an organized manner an overview and summary of what, in my view, are the most important principles of Stoicism, so that the reader can thus form a comprehensive view of the main questions that shaped Stoic philosophy. For those wishing to deepen their study of Stoic philosophy, I have organized in the appendix a list of primary sources (the texts of the ancient Stoics and their ancient commentators, in Greek and Latin, and sometimes also in Arabic, which have come down to us) and secondary sources (modern commentators on these texts).

Brief Explanation of Stoic Philosophy and Its Parts

As we have seen, the three fundamental parts of Stoic philosophy are: physics, logic, and ethics. We will speak in more detail about each one of these parts, remembering that the Stoic theses presented here are criticized and defended by complex demonstrations, to

[12] One must suspend judgment when there is no evidence either to give assent or to deny a proposition, such as the following: "The number of stars is odd." The skeptics extend this suspension to all judgments, sometimes safeguarding some aspects of common sense.

which we may not always be able to refer completely. Let's start, then, with physics.[13]

THE STOIC PHYSICS

As we have already mentioned, the Stoics take up the Heraclitean notion of *Logos*, which we can translate as Universal Intelligence or Intelligence that interconnects and governs everything. Just as for Heraclitus, this *Logos* is corporeal, a pure form of fire (in Greek, *pyr*), the so-called artisan or demiurgic fire, the primordial element of reality that, being eternal, is Divinity itself. Furthermore, for the Stoics, the *Logos* is Providence (in Greek, *pronoia*), because it gives to each being what it needs to exist, like a general providing each soldier with the equipment (in Greek, *paraskeue*) they need for war, and it is also fate (in Greek, *heimarmene*), because it determines, through efficient causality, the chain of events that occur in the Cosmos. There is, therefore, a Divine Intelligence that governs and composes everything, supplying what each being needs to exist and fulfill its own nature.

This Intelligence is also demiurgic, as it shapes the Cosmos. According to Stoic physics, from the primordial and demiurgic fire originate the elements that compose all beings in the world: the phenomenological fire (naturally hot), the phenomenological air (naturally cold), the phenomenological water (naturally wet), and the phenomenological earth (naturally dry). These elements can transform into each other, following the cosmic cycles of the phenomenal world: fire transforms into air; air into water; and water into earth. Conversely, earth transforms into water; water into air; and air into fire. In the phenomenal world, fire and air, being naturally active, combine to form the pneumatic substance (in Greek, *pneuma*), which permeates everything. Water and earth, being naturally passive, combine to constitute the principle of extension (the inert matter, in Greek, *hyle*). All beings in the Cosmos

[13] We will follow here the fragments on these themes listed in *Stoicorum veterum fragmenta*, by Von Arnim, and *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, by Long & Sedley.

are a combination of *pneuma* and *hyle*. *Pneuma* acts on extension in two inverse and simultaneous directions that complement each other: expanding, thanks to the phenomenological fire, and thereby conferring each being its qualities; and contracting, thanks to the air, granting each being its unity. The balance between these two movements grants reality to each existing being. Once such balance is disrupted, the being literally dissolves, giving rise to one or more new beings through its decomposition.

*

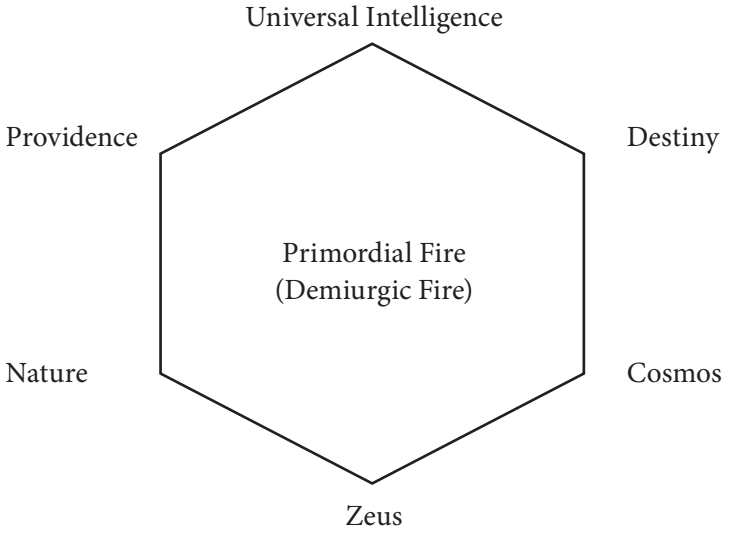


Table 1: Aspects of Stoic Logos

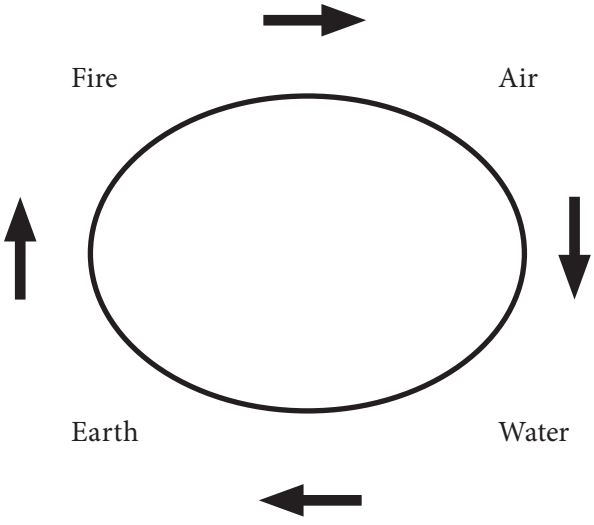


Table 2: Cosmic cycles of transformation between the elements

The *pneuma* occurs in the Cosmos in four fundamental degrees of tonicity. The tonicity of a body refers, on the one hand, to its dense or rarefied nature, tensioned or distended. The lowest degree of tonicity (denser and less tensioned) corresponds to the physical structure (*hexis*) of inanimate beings. Next, we have the nature (in Greek, *physis*) of plants, which is characterized by the function of growth; the soul (in Greek, *psyche*) of animals, which is characterized by the functions of representation (in Greek, *phantasía*),[14] through which they can gain knowledge of external things by perceiving

[14] The notion of *phantasía* is of fundamental importance for understanding Stoic philosophy as it relates to both logical, epistemological, and ethical issues. However, there is no agreement regarding the translation of the term: "appearance," "impression," "presentation," and "representation." Among the alternatives, it seems to us that the term "representation" (which, according to the Aurelio dictionary, has the general philosophical sense of "concrete content apprehended by the senses, imagination, memory, or thought") best serves our purpose. It should be noted that, in the conception of Chrysippus, *phantasía* has two facets: a sensible one (being a modification of the guiding part) and a virtual one (being articulated in linguistic form).

them in their souls, and impulse (in Greek, *horme*), by which they react to the represented things. Finally, we have the rational soul or guiding capacity (in Greek, *hegemonikon*), *pneuma* in the maximum degree of tension and in the minimum degree of density, which acquires the power to interpret the world around it.

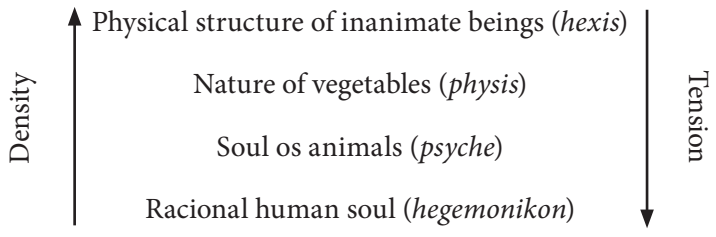


Table 3: The 4 Degrees of tonicity of the cosmic pneuma

Beyond the functions of unification, growth, representation, and impulse, the rational soul possesses the capacity for assent (in Greek, *synkatathesis*). Unlike other animals, whose impulses are determinated by perceptions, humans have power over both assent and impulses, meaning their reaction to represented things is not automatic but subordinate to the opinions they hold about them. Humans are guided by the ideas they have about things because their perceptions are articulated rationally and linguistically: their thinking is active in the face of reality, and their activity consists of reflecting on the perceived object.

Chrysippus illustrates this thesis with the image of a cylinder that, to move, requires an external force to act upon it, although the quality of its movement is determinated by its own physical nature, that is, by the geometric shape that causes it to roll. Similarly, the rational soul is affected by the representation of external objects, but its reaction to the representation is due to its own nature, that

is, the quality of its beliefs and its degree of equilibrium in relation to the tonicity that is appropriate for it by nature. For example, if someone fears dogs because they consider them dangerous, they will be frightened at the sight of a dog, but this same sight will not cause fear in someone who does not fear them because they do not consider them dangerous. Thus, fearing or not fearing a dog will depend on the opinion we have about it.

The Cosmos as a whole is, for the Stoics, a living being whose soul is the sum of the pneumatic substance of all existing beings and whose body is the sum of the inert matter of all existing beings.

In the cosmic cycle in which we find ourselves, the pneumatic substance is the very Divinity, since the primordial demiurgic fire only fully manifests itself during the period of conflagration (*ekpyrosis*), in which, for the Stoics, the world is consumed by fire, reducing itself to the original fiery unity to then initiate a new cosmic cycle, unfolding again into the four elements of the phenomenal world and promoting the rebirth of the Cosmos, just like the Phoenix of Greek mythology, which, once consumed by flames, is reborn from its own ashes.

The expansive movement of fire, through which it unfolds and constitutes the Cosmos, is providential, for thus the Divinity confers upon all beings the possibility of realizing their individual natures.

After constituting the world from itself, the demiurgic fire returns to its own creation to rest in the dampness as a seed, as a promise of life, so that when the Cosmos is exhausted, it sprouts again from this seed and consumes everything, renewing the world and creating it anew.[15]

Stoic pantheism, the thesis according to which the divine is everywhere in the world, immediately follows from what precedes: if each thing shares with Divinity the pneumatic substance, then

15 These last lines arose from a conversation with Joelson Nascimento, who was then writing an article about Stoic *ekpyrosis*. The one who first drew my attention to this passage about the seed mentioned by Diogenes Laertius was Dr. Mariana Condé, in her thesis *Chrysippus and Seneca facing the question of time, or, Time conceived as a reflection of events* (2020), whose reading I recommend.

each thing is, in its own measure, divine. Humans, however, are closer to Divinity, because the *pneuma* that comprises their souls is the most tensioned and least dense among existing beings, thus acquiring the rationality that characterizes the Divine Intelligence.[16]

The Stoics also say that Zeus (another name they give to Divine Intelligence, which corresponds to the ruler of the Greek pantheon) is the father of all humans, and therefore humans are brothers and sisters to each other.

Furthermore, humans can determinate their actions based on their own conceptions of things: they are, in their own way, divine beings and co-artisans of universal destiny, each causing, in what belongs and competes to them, their spectrum of actions and, consequently, to the same extent, cosmic destiny. Thus, the Stoic universe reconciles the determinism resulting from the causal chains initiated by the Demiurge and the freedom of humans, who can choose how to react to the events derived from these causal chains.

Stoic physics, as Rachel Gazolla aptly observed,[17] reunites humanity and nature, a union that had been broken with the separation of the natural and the moral, caused by the civilizational process. The opposition between custom and laws (*nomos*, in Greek) and nature (*physis*, in Greek) led the sophists to recognize the chasm between the two orders. In Stoic physics, we have the quest for this lost unity, which is why we can once again, both individually and collectively, reunite and harmonize with the natural, and as the Stoic motto says, follow the Nature of the world, which is another name the Stoics give to the pneumatic substance that constitutes, pervades, and governs reality.

Before moving on to logic, it is important to make one last observation about Nature as Providence. Although, for the Stoics, the cosmic order is essentially beautiful as a whole, it is not perfect in the modern sense of the term, as preferred by, for example, Leibniz,

[16] Constituting, as we will see ahead, a fragment of the very divinity itself.

[17] In her book *O ofício do filósofo estoico* [The Craft of the Stoic Philosopher] (1999).

according to whom we live in the best of all possible worlds. For the Stoics, especially those of the imperial period, matter resists divine pneumatic activity. Furthermore, for Chrysippus, Divinity cannot calculate in advance the interactions between causal chains, which explains the existence of all sorts of imperfections in the world, such as diseases. Unlike the Christian God, the Stoic Divinity is limited both by matter, which was created from its core (and thus begins to resist its dominion),[18] and by its capacity for foresight, which cannot anticipate undesirable side effects derived from its own demiurgic action. Thus, the Stoic universe reserves for us some portions of the unpredictable and chaotic. For the Stoics, we do not live in the best of all possible worlds, but rather in the best world that was possible, with humans having the role of assisting Divinity in the administration of the world to the extent that they can, that is, in the administration of cities and the surrounding nature, seeking to reflect, in these spheres of influence, the governance of the cosmic city in which the world is summarized.[19] Providence, therefore, does not manifest itself in things in an isolated or individual manner, since many of the things that exist and occur to individuals literally oppose their particular nature, but in things and events taken together and generically, to the extent that they contribute to universal harmony. From this derive important moral reflections and applications, as we will see later.

LOGIC

The Stoic concept of *logic* encompasses more meanings than contemporary usage. Today, the term refers to modern formal logics developed since the nineteenth century, while for the Stoics, the term also includes theory of knowledge, theory of language, propositional logic, study of sophisms, and rhetoric.

[18] Similarly, as the raw material (in Greek, *chora*) Platonic resists the yoke of Ideas (as taught in the dialogue *Timaeus*).

[19] See Epictetus, *Discourses*, 1.7.28.

Let's start with the Stoic theory of knowledge. In this field, the key concept is that of representation (*phantasia*). For the Stoics, we do not have direct access to external reality, but this access is mediated by the senses, which transmit sensory data to the rational soul (the directive capacity, the *hegemonikon*, in Greek) that are logically interpreted. In other words, sensory data are interpreted by intelligence, which may perform this task well or poorly. If it does so well, what the soul understands by what affected it corresponds to the external object, constituting knowledge about the thing. Otherwise, it is a false opinion that does not correspond to the external object. The Greek term *phantasia* comes from "light" (*phos*, in Greek): just like light, it illuminates the external object and also itself. Representation, therefore, is the result of the activity of the rational soul, in which it is stored as an alteration.

The soul of the ideal sage, for the Stoics, contains only correct representations, which they call comprehensive (*kataleptikai*). These representations form in his soul an impregnable system, which does not allow the entry of any falsehood. But, as we said, such a sage is *ideal* and does not actually exist, because, in the real world, we invariably make mistakes in our judgments about things, which is why we constantly need to analyze our beliefs about reality.

Human representation is rational, distinguishing itself from the representation of other animals by being linguistically and logically articulated. This linguistic articulation occurs through what the Stoics call the "sayable" (the *lekton*, in Greek), precisely because it is what can be uttered and, therefore, constitutes the meaning of words. Thus, we can both talk about representations because of their linguistic character and modify the rational annotations we associate with them through our thinking.

The exercise of evaluating representations is crucial, for our ability to detect false judgments about reality has a direct impact on our ability to deal with external things and, consequently, on

our happiness, since false opinions about things lead us to misuse them. That's why logic is so important to the Stoics: through it, we can test the validity of our arguments, which is fundamental, for it is through them that we organize our knowledge about reality.

Chrysippus was the first in the West to conceive of propositional logic, which is divided into a theory of logical proposition, or assertible (in Greek, *axiom*), and a theory of argument (in Greek, *logos*). The assertibles are the linguistic entities that can be true or false, that is, that can correspond to reality or not. The arguments, systems that link premises to a conclusion, use the assertibles to deduce conclusions from them.

Let's see an example:

> If it's day, there's light;
> It's day; therefore, there's light.

"If it's day, there is light" and "It is day" are the premises. "There is light" is the conclusion. This is a valid argument that leads us to knowledge about reality. However, what if we say:

> If it's day, there's light;
> It's not day; therefore, there's no light.

This is a fallacy, a faulty argument that seems true, but it isn't.[20] For those who don't have knowledge of classical logic, it's not easy to perceive a fallacy in this example. However, detecting fallacies is crucial for the rational soul, as it depends on true representations and valid demonstrations to build secure knowledge about reality. Hence the Stoics of Antiquity stood out as logicians: they perceived the urgency of developing a logic that could be used both for the constitution of scientific knowledge and everyday issues.

[20] This is an instance of the fallacy "denying the antecedent," which occurs when one attempts to draw a conclusion from a conditional and the negation of its antecedent, which is not logically possible.

ETHICS

The Stoic ethics is closely linked to the physics and logic of the Stoa. According to physics, as we have seen, the human soul is corporeal, consisting of *pneuma* to such a degree of tonicity that it becomes capable of knowing reality. According to logic, this knowledge occurs through a correct interpretation of sensory data by the rational soul, resulting in a comprehensive representation of the real, which, when ordered within a system of other comprehensive representations, becomes broad knowledge of reality. In possession of this broad knowledge, the human being can adequately respond to external stimuli, becoming virtuous and happy, and fulfilling their own nature.[21]

The knowledge acquired and ordered by the rational soul is subdivided into virtues or excellences (in Greek, *arete* ; in Latin, *virtus*). Each virtue or excellence gathers knowledge about how to deal with external things. Let's see some examples of virtues. Wisdom (or prudence; in Greek, *phronesis*) is the knowledge of what is necessary to do or not and what is indifferent. Temperance (in Greek, *sophrosyne*) is the knowledge of the things that must be sought or avoided and of indifferent things. Justice (in Greek, *dikaiosyne*) is knowing what part belongs to each. Courage (in Greek, *andreia*) is knowledge about what needs to be feared or not. Wisdom, temperance, justice, and courage together make up the four cardinal virtues already mentioned by Plato.[22]

The fundamental theorem of Stoic ethics is the distinction between what is good, what is bad, and what is indifferent. For the Stoics, only wisdom is a good and only ignorance is a bad. External things (including our body) are indifferent. This may seem radical but, in fact, it is not. In short, the Stoics maintain that external

[21] "Happiness" in this context translates *eudaimonia*, a Greek word whose primary meaning is to be full of good divine spirits and consequently bear fruit. Nowadays, it is common to call happy those who are cheerful or who experience many pleasures. This is not the meaning for Stoicism, in which *eudaimonia* signifies the state of human beings' fullness.

[22] See Plato, *Republic,* iv.

things, to be well used and become profitable for someone, must be handled with virtue.[23] Otherwise, if used with ignorance, they become harmful. Wealth, for example, in the hands of an ignorant person, ends up destroying him. The same goes for other talents and advantages external to the rational soul. This is because wisdom is needed for such things to be truly beneficial. Poverty is also bearable for those who possess wisdom. The same goes for other external disadvantages to the rational soul.[24]

Thus, making good use of external things is the mark of the wise human. Through this good use, he harmonizes with externality, and his soul consequently harmonizes with the flow of other things in the world, that is, with events. Hence comes the Stoic motto: "Follow Nature."

Zeno of Citium uttered the first formulation of this principle, saying that the end (the goal: in Greek, *telos*) of human life is "to live in conformity."[25] Cleanthes would have made an addition to the motto, making it "to live in conformity with Nature."[26]

Zeno still said: "Happiness consists in having a good flow of life."[27] This formulation points to the psychophysics of the Stoics, according to which the rational soul inhabits the heart and flows constantly to all points of the human body. A soul that flows well is, therefore, a balanced soul.

And furthermore: for Zeno, "virtue is enough for happiness,"[28] expressing thus what we said about the epistemic character of virtue, that is, that the cardinal virtues are, for the Stoics, knowledge, and that this knowledge is enough for a happy life, since, through it, we can make good use of external things.

[23] As Plato already affirms in the dialogue *Euthydemus*.
[24] As for that, read the dialogue *Euthydemus* by Plato.
[25] In Greek, *homologoumenos zen*.
[26] In Greek, *homologoumenos zen tei physei*.
[27] In Greek, *eudaimonia d´estin euroia biou*.
[28] In Greek, *autarche t´einai auten areten pros eudaminonian*.

The good use of external things implies, as we have seen, the correct attitude towards them. For Panaetius of Rhodes, such an attitude depends on the understanding of our roles in the world.[29] We noticed above that, in Stoicism, the human is an integral part of Nature, differentiating from other natural beings by its rationality, through which he can know the things of the world. However, this same capacity to generate knowledge and a life according to Nature can submerge into ignorance, an ignorance such that the human, instead of harmonizing with Divinity, ends up opposing it, living in a manner contrary to Nature and distancing himself from *eudaimonia* [happiness]. In order for this not to occur, Panaetius distinguishes between four roles to be well fulfilled by each human being in the world: the first is that of a rational animal, which distinguishes us from other animals, a role from which the moral character of the human (the capacity to be just or unjust, good or bad) arises, absent in other cosmic beings; the second is the particular character of each one, both physical and psychic, by which humans distinguish themselves from each other;[30] the third is that imposed by circumstances, by reason of which, for example, some are born into wealthy families and others into humble families; the fourth is the profession that each one chooses to pursue.

To fulfill the first role well, we need to understand the human in his relationship with Nature. To follow the second, it is necessary to know ourselves individually and identify both our qualities and our limitations. The third role leads us to become aware of the peculiar characteristics of the society in which we live and of our particular fortune. The fourth is the only one that is our choice. However, this choice will only be adequate if we correctly identify our qualities and limitations and choose a profession that is in accordance with them.

[29] Cicero, *De Officiis*, 1.97-117.

[30] Mental and physical qualities, which make certain humans more suited to certain professions than others, like the muscles in the case of a boxer and the ability to abstract in the case of a mathematician.

Finally, concluding this brief synthesis of Stoic ethics, I will mention Epictetus, who determines the ultimate end of the human as that of an exegete, that is, interpreter of the Cosmos.[31] As virtue is knowledge, and as the understanding of our role in the world also derives from knowledge (about the world, the human, and each one of us individually), the reason for his assertion becomes evident: the human being realizes himself in knowledge because he needs it for happiness. Being, by Nature, rational, his realization will only occur when he realizes this rationality through an effective knowledge of reality and of himself, knowledge that is obtained through philosophical and scientific dialogue and the spiritual understanding of the intimate relationship of the human with the universe, which both makes him distinct from other beings and confers upon him the responsibility to assist, to the extent of what belongs to him, nature in the conduct of the world.

[31] Epictetus, *Discourses*, 1.6.19.

3.
Practicing Stoicism

The fight is not for something banal, but for going crazy or not.
— Epictetus, frag. 178

To present, in this chapter, the Stoic thought through the prism of its practice, we will use Epictetus' celebrated division of Stoic philosophy into three topics: the topic of judgment or desire, the topic of action, and the topic of persuasion. (Epictetus himself suggests that these topics must be studied and put into practice in this same order).

Through the first topic, we correct our desires and repulsions, producing an internal discourse capable of replacing what was given to us by common sense, reorienting and transforming our view of reality. Through the second topic, we learn to consider, in each case, what the appropriate action is, softening our instinctive impulses and making use of them in a way that is beneficial to ourselves and the community in which we live. The third topic, reserved for those who have already mastered the first two, namely,

advanced students of Stoicism, teaches us to ensure what we have obtained through the application of the first two topics. Its scope encompasses logic and epistemology, with which we can confront the deceptive persuasiveness of arguments and objects. Such deceptive persuasiveness makes us believe a false argument to be true, so we must study propositional logic and the classification of sophisms,[1] and it makes us think something is good when it is not, as in the case of what we call temptations, so we must study epistemology and separate the thing perceived by the senses from what we think about it, as well as learn to visualize things in the world beyond the projection of our instincts, seeing them as they truly are.

The Judgement or Desire Topic

The first topic of Epictetus's philosophy deals with judgment (in Greek, *krisis*)[2] and desire (in Greek, *orexis*) and aims to rectify the judgment errors we inherit from common sense regarding the value of things in the world and simultaneously to reorient our desires and aversions, since we naturally desire things we consider good and repudiate things we consider bad. The first topic, which I will divide into two main theorems, the Ontological Theorem and the Gratitude Theorem, begins with a rational exercise of deconstructing false beliefs about reality. This is followed by a reconstruction of the individual's belief system, reconnecting it to other things and to the Cosmic Intelligence itself as an integral and important part of this world, redefining the meaning of their existence and harmonizing it with the Cosmos through a sense of belonging and gratitude.

[1] False arguments that seem to be true.

[2] In this context, Epictetus also uses the terms "opinion" (in Greek, *dogma*) and "supposition" (in Greek, *hypolepsis*).

THE ONTOLOGICAL THEOREM

The Ontological Theorem is announced in Chapter 1 of the *Enchiridion* of Epictetus and in his first diatribe:

> Of things, some are under our control, others are not. Judgment, impulse, desire, repulsion are under our control - in short: to the extent that it is our action. But the body, possessions, reputation, public office are not under our control - in short: to the extent that it is not our action. (2) The things that are under our control is by nature free, unimpeded, unobstructed. Those that are not under our control are weak, enslaved, obstructed, foreign. (3) Remember then that if you consider as free what is by nature enslaved, and as your own what belongs to another, you will be hindered, you will lament, you will be disturbed, you will reproach both gods and men. But if you think that only what is yours is yours, and what belongs to another, as it really does, belonging to another, no one will ever compel you, no one will hinder you, you will not reproach anyone, nor accuse anyone; nor, even once, will you act constrained, you will not have enemies, and no one will harm you, for you will suffer no damage.[3]

Epictetus begins the *Enchiridion* with the famous distinction between things that are under our control and things that are not under our control, which we will call the Ontological Theorem because it distinguishes things within the scope of their being (*to on*, in Greek). "Under our control" translates the Greek expression *eph'hemin*, in which *eph* is the contraction of *epi* and *hemin*, the personal pronoun "us" in the dative case in Greek. The expression literally means "what is upon us," but since the preposition *epi* followed by the dative implies, among other things, a relationship of causality, we can understand the things under our control as those that have us as their cause. As their causers, we are also

[3] Epictetus, *Enchiridion*, 1.

responsible for them, which is why Alfredo Julien[4] and I often render the expression as "things that are under our charge."

Epictetus specifies that only four things are under our control: judgment, impulse, desire, and aversion. To these, we can add the use of representations, as we have access to the world through representations, and all our judgments, desires, and impulses are associated with them, since we desire, repel, and judge the things we perceive by the senses, being driven to act before them or, rather, before the representation we have of them.[5]

NOTHING EXTERNAL IS BY ITSELF A GOOD OR AN EVIL

the next step in applying the distinction between things that are under out control and things that are not is to understand that no external thing is, by itself, a good or an evil. Rather, good and evil are properties of our actions, which are, in turn, engendered from ideas and conceptions to which we have given assent (correctly or incorrectly) regarding things of the world and ourselves.

Although, as we have seen, the Stoics external things are indifferent, Epictetus emphasizes that this does not mean we should ignore them, but rather that they are *materials* for our choice.[6] "Choice" translates the Epictetian concept of *prohairesis*, which means, among other things, our "capacity for choice," to which the things under our charge are subject: judgment, impulse, assent, and the use of representations. The capacity for choice is more relevant in Epictetus than in the other Stoics whose works have passed down to us. It is the rational soul par excellence, the inner strength that makes freedom and happiness possible.

The human soul has some operations, so to speak, automatic. Thought spontaneously elaborates things from the ideas to which

4 Professor of the Ancient History Department of the Federal University of Sergipe (Brazil) with whom I performed a translation of the *Manual of Epictetus,* which was published by the Coimbra Press (2014).

5 Because we do not have direct access to the things of the world, but this access is mediated by the senses and by the thought that evaluates the sensations.

6 See Epictetus, *Discourses*, 2.1 to 2.6.

we give assent. If, for example, we consider cats beautiful animals, when our thought perceives a cat through the senses, it will automatically associate the perception of the cat with the idea of animal beauty. Only the *prohairesis*, the capacity for choice, can reassess judgments like these. Only this capacity can inspect our judgments about ourselves and the world around us. And note well: it cannot be prevented externally. Even if someone is tortured to say something, there is no torture that can make them stop believing in something they truly believe.

These are the reasons why Epictetus affirms that we are, first and foremost, a capacity of choice (*prohairesis*), and that it is up to such capacity to apply and suspend assent to judgments and assumptions. Therefore, Epictetus repeatedly says that human good lies in the use of representations and that this good consists of a capacity of choice in good condition. To operate well, the capacity of choice must be supplied with correct opinions and assumptions about oneself, about humans, and about the things of the world, as it makes its choices based on these same opinions and assumptions. A capacity of choice in a bad state—that is, one that has given assent to false judgments—will see the things of the world through the distorted lenses of these false judgments, consequently behaving erroneously before them.

The way to purify the capacity of choice is through the examination of opinions, firstly starting from the Ontological Theorem, subjecting each thing to scrutiny, and classifying it as either under our responsibility or not, then associating it with the concepts of good, evil, or indifferent.

This should be a constant practice for those who start in Stoicism. As Epictetus tells us,

> Aiming at such important things, remember that you need not to strive moderately, but to completely abandon some things and, for now, leave others for later. However, if you

> desire both important things and to rule and enrich, perhaps you will obtain none of these, because you also aspire to the important ones, and you will not achieve in any way those things from which freedom and happiness result solely.[7]

The Ontological Theorem implies three fundamental areas for human action: the first, the sphere of our thoughts, impulses, and assents; the second, the sphere of physical phenomena and the laws that govern them; the third, the sphere of our relationships with other human beings. In the realm of our interiority, as we have seen, we can control the assents to our judgments and make good use of our representations. In the realm of externality referring to bodies, we can interact with physical beings and use them according to the laws that determine them, such as, for example, a water mill grinding wheat using the force of the river's current, a mill that can only be built by someone who understands the nature of the water current and has the ingenuity to know how to take advantage of its flow. In the realm of exteriority referring to other humans, we must be aware that we do not control their opinions, but we can make suggestions to them through persuasion.

It is essential to keep these distinctions in mind, as we constantly get irritated with others for thinking that they must agree with us on this or that. We also get irritated with objects that create hindrances for our actions and behave ridiculously, while at the same time being profoundly unhappy. We need to understand that the things of Nature obey natural laws and that other human beings follow, each one, their own capacity for choice. Therefore, we need to understand that the world and humans tread their own paths and that often they will surprise us positively or negatively, but such facts constitute the reality of things. As Epictetus says,

> If you want to progress, abandon thoughts like "if I neglect my business, I won't have anything to live on", "if I don't punish

[7] Epictetus, *Enchiridion*, 1.

> the servant, he will become useless". For it is preferable to die of hunger without distress and fear than to live anxiously in abundance. It is preferable to be evil the servant than to be unhappy yourself; (2) It begins, then, with the small things: when a little olive oil is spilled, when a little wine is stolen, say that "for this price the absence of suffering is sold", "for this price the absence of unrest is sold", "nothing is free". And when you call the servant, consider that it is possible that he may not come, and even if he does come, it is possible that he may not do any of the things you want. But he is not so good that you should give him your unrest.[8]

In summary, the Ontological Theorem teaches us that only the things under our charge are properly good or bad, while the rest are materials upon which our choice operates. Therefore, we should not desire to seek external things as if they were goods in themselves, nor repudiate them as if they were evils in themselves, because, ultimately, they cannot be chosen. We cannot choose not to die or not to get sick, we cannot choose for our loved ones to live forever, we cannot choose for the individuals with whom we live to please us or agree with us or even like us, but we can decide what attitude we should have towards each of these things that happen to us.

According to Epictetus, that's the way to avoid the passions that arise from our desires and unmet aversions, which will necessarily happen if we project desire and aversion onto external things: they do not behave according to our choice but accidentally and do not have us as their cause, which is why we should not pretend to control them or think we actually possess them.

For the Stoics, in general, and for Epictetus, in particular, the two main passions (suffering and pleasure) are the counterpart of assent given to false suppositions. According to Chrysippus, we can describe these two passions as follows:

- PLEASURE (in Greek, *hedone*): occurs when I mistakenly believe that something is good and have it before me.

[8] Epictetus, *Enchiridion*, 12.

- SUFFERING (in Greek, *lype*): occurs when I mistakenly believe that something is evil and have it before me.

Fear (in Greek, *phobos*) and desire (in Greek, *epithymia*) are, in this perspective, passions derived from pleasure and suffering, since the former can arise either from the fear of losing what is pleasurable by mistakenly believing it to be good, or from the dread of encountering what causes suffering by erroneously believing it to be evil, while the latter originates both from seeking what gives pleasure by mistakenly believing it to be good and from not encountering what causes suffering by erroneously believing it to be evil.

In both cases, we have an error of judgment: to believe that something is a good or an evil, when in fact it is not. When this judgment is corrected, the corresponding passion is eliminated. Note that the Stoics define passion as an excessive movement in the soul that, modified and corrected, gives us access to the corresponding good passions. Therefore, the counterparts of bad passions are:

- CONTENTMENT (in Greek, *chara*, which is the positive counterpart of pleasure): it occurs when I correctly believe that something is good and have it in my presence.
- ABSENCE OF SUFFERING: occurs when I correctly believe that something is not a harm and have it in my presence.

Note that there is no specific name for the rational counterpart of suffering, as there is no rational suffering, since the natural state of the soul is fundamentally absence of suffering, tranquility, and happiness.

Furthermore, we must observe that bad passions are the counterpart of assent to false opinions, that is, symptoms of ignorance; thus, correcting our judgments and, at the same time, curing ourselves of bad passions and lack of knowledge. Hence, Epictetus teaches that the first topic is about judgments, desires, and passions.

We will return to the theme of passions in the last part of this book, when I will teach you, reader, to write your own manual and begin your journey of self-knowledge.

THE THEOREM OF GRATITUDE

It is necessary, therefore, to engage in a daily reinterpretation of the world from the view of the Ontological Theorem to the point of making this practice a habit. It is necessary for us to reevaluate all our representations and to withdraw assent from judgments that confer value on external things. However, for Epictetus, the philosophical exercise of the first topic does not end here: the correction of our judgments about the things of the world must pass through the reevaluation of what the world itself is and its relation to each existing being. We thus arrive at the question of recognizing the Providence of the World and the act of giving thanks.

The argumentation of Epictetus regarding the act of giving thanks (in Greek, *eucharistia*) involves four fundamental premises.

The first is expressed in chapter 31 of Epictetus's *Enchiridion*[9] and can be summarized as follows: **(1)** *the human who places their good in things outside their control will blame God when those things are taken away from them, and therefore will not be grateful to God.*

[9] Epictetus, *Enchiridion*, 31: "(1) Regarding piety towards the gods, know that the most important thing is for you to have correct judgments about them – that they exist and govern all things in a beautiful and just manner – and that you are willing to obey them, to accept all events and to follow them spontaneously as performed by the highest of intelligences. Thus, you will not censure the gods nor accuse them of forgetting you. (2) This cannot happen otherwise than by removing good and evil from things that are not under our control and placing them solely among those that are under our control. For if you suppose any of the things not under our control to be good or evil, it is absolutely necessary that when you fail to obtain what you desire and encounter what you do not desire, you will censure and hate those responsible. (3) It is natural for every living being to flee and avoid things that appear harmful and their causes, and to seek and admire things that appear beneficial and their causes. It is inconceivable, then, that someone, thinking they are suffering harm, should rejoice in what appears to cause them harm. Similarly, it is also impossible to rejoice in one's own harm. Hence also this: a father is insulted by his son when he does not share with the son the things that seem good to the latter. (4) This belief that tyrannical power is a good also makes enemies of Polynices and Eteocles. Because of this, farmers, sailors, merchants, those who lose their wives and children, insult the gods. For where the interest lies, there also lies piety. Thus, it is necessary that whoever takes care of desire and aversion also takes care of piety. (5) But it is fitting for everyone to make libations, offer sacrifices, and first fruits according to ancestral custom, in a pure, diligent, not careless, not mean, and not beyond their capacity manner."

This is because, firstly, if the human places their good in things that are not under their control and are external, they will stand against whoever obstructs access to them, which is why valuing external things is one of the causes of impiety.[10] Secondly, it is part of human nature itself to seek what is seen as good and to avoid what is seen as evil.[11] Thus, when value is given to something external, one seeks that something and sees as an enemy whoever obstructs access to it. In the case of God, the human who values external things will blame Him when such things are taken away and will see God as the cause of that deprivation. The result will be a revolt against Divinity, which will make the rebel both impious and incapable of being grateful. And Epictetus concludes:

> Whoever once offered a sacrifice to wish beautifully - To wish according to nature? For we give thanks to the gods for the things in which we place our good.[12]

Therefore, the act of giving thanks presupposes, according to Epictetus, the correct application of the theorem regarding things that are under our control or not (Ontological Theorem), which leads us to the second premise: **(2)** *the human being who places his good in things under his control, things that cannot in any way be suppressed and over which we have full responsibility, will be grateful to God.* Because whoever places his good in the things under his control recognizes that only they have value in themselves for him and that, therefore, his own worth as a human being depends solely on himself, that is, on the cultivation of his capacity for choice and, consequently, the realization of his own choices, for which he will be grateful to God. Therefore, whoever educates his judgments,

[10] Ibid., 31.2. Correlatively, even maintaining those external things to which he mistakenly gives value, the human being is not truly pious, for he will be grateful to God for things that are indeed worthless (see Epictetus, *Discourses*, 1.10.4.1).

[11] Ibid., 31.3.

[12] Epictetus, *Discourses* 1.19.25.3. See also Epictetus, *Enchiridion*, 31.4 ("For where your interest lies, there too is piety") and Matthew 6:21 ("For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.").

desires, inclinations, and aversions, and makes good use of their representations and the operations directly associated with the capacity for choice, will be grateful to God for what it is necessary to be grateful for. In this regard, Epictetus tells us:

> Things suitable to the force you possess are placed before you. However, at this moment, you instead set it aside when it is necessary to have it awake and attentive. You will not, instead, give thanks to the gods[13] for putting you above the many things that they did not place under your control, but only proclaim you responsible for those under your control. They did not make you responsible for your parents, nor your siblings, nor for your body, your possessions, your death, your life. So, for what did they made you responsible? Only for what is under your control: the use of representations as necessary. So why do you drag to yourself those things for which you are not responsible? That is causing problems for yourself![14]

But what evidence does Epictetus present in order to show that the capacity for choice is truly under our charge and not externally determinated? The answer lies in his *Discourses*:

> Man, you have the capacity for choice by nature unhindered and unconstrained . . . I will demonstrate this to you first on the topic of assent. Can anyone prevent you from inclining towards truth? No one can. Can anyone force you to accept falsehood? No one can . . . You see that, in this very topic, you possess the capacity for choice unhindered, unconstrained, unimpeded. Let's see: it's different concerning the capacity of desire and the capacity of impulse. So, what can overcome an impulse other than another impulse? What can overcome

[13] Epictetus sometimes refers to the gods, to God, and to Zeus, but he always has in mind the Stoic Divinity, the Intelligence that governs everything, about which we spoke previously.

[14] Epictetus, *Discourses*, 1.12.31–35. Trad. Aldo Dinucci. Coimbra: Imprensa de Coimbra, 2019.

> desire and aversion other than another desire and another aversion?[15]

Thus, the capacity for choice is, by nature, unimpeded and unconstrained. Proof of this is that, first, one cannot prevent someone from inclining towards what seems true to them and, second, one cannot prevent someone from refusing to accept what seems false to them. For example, it is possible to force someone to say they believe in something, but nothing will make them take as true what appears false to them and vice versa, because, as we have seen, this process is entirely internal and depends solely on the opinions that the capacity for choice has before it and the assent that such capacity grants them.

However, assigning value to internal things and withdrawing intrinsic value from external things is a necessary but not sufficient condition for the act of giving thanks. It will also be necessary to have a comprehensive view of reality by which Divine Providence is recognized, both (3) in relation to the unimpeded capacity for choice conferred upon it and (4) in relation to the things that contribute to its subsistence in the Cosmos. Let us analyze such premises:

(3) *The human being who recognizes that God has granted all humans the unimpeded capacity for choice will be grateful to God.*

The founder of the school of Nicopolis tells us: "Zeus made me free. Do you think he predestined his own son to be a slave?"[16] We can understand by this bias the affirmation of the divine parenthood of humans in Epictetus as a metaphor by which it is indicated that humans possess within themselves the same active and intelligent principle that structures the world. As this principle is not determinated but determining, so too is its instance in each human being.[17]

[15] Ibid., 1.20.21-24.

[16] Ibid., 1.19.9.

[17] In *Discourses* 4.5.35, Epictetus says that Socrates patiently tolerated his irascible wife and distant son, which, for our Stoic, only became possible through the correct exercise of the capacity of choice,

But, as we said, mere recognition of the unharmed character of this capacity is not enough for human beings to be grateful to God: it is necessary for them to recognize the providential character of God that is evident in the things of the world taken as a whole. This will be the last premise of Epictetus's argument regarding the act of being grateful to God:

(4) *The human being capable of recognizing the Divine Providence in the things that have been given to him for the supply of his own life will be grateful to God.*

To make the human being grateful to God for the things that were given to him for the supply of his own life, it is necessary to develop the ability to see together the things that occur in the Cosmos. Thus, Epictetus tells us:

> If someone possesses within themselves these two capacities, it is easy to praise Providence[18] for each of the things that happen in the Cosmos: to see together what happens to each one and to be grateful. Otherwise, they will not see the usefulness of what happens and will not give thanks for them even if they see them.[19]

For our Stoic, although external things considered individually have no value in themselves, they reveal together the providence and goodness of God. For the human being to fully grasp this fact, both a comprehensive view of reality and the ability to be grateful are necessary. This latter capacity is developed through the correct application of the Ontological Theorem, which distinguishes between things that are under our control and those that are not. However, the reader will perceive that being able to have a comprehensive view requires something more. After extracting

which is independent of what tyrants or crowds want, since this correct use cannot be externally hindered. For Epictetus, whoever understands such a thing and nurtures such opinions "creates friendship at home, concord in the city, peace among nations, and is grateful to God."

[18] *Pronoia*: Divine Providence.

[19] Epictetus, *Discourses,* 1.6.2.1–2.

the intrinsic value from external things, it is also necessary to recognize in them an instrumental character, as they are material for the exercise of choice. This requires a view of reality that connects one thing to another, like grass to sheep, sheep to wool and milk, and these to us, for example. Moreover, this gratitude does not depend on knowledge of every single thing that makes up reality. For Epictetus, contemplating just one of these relationships is enough to perceive it and be correctly grateful to God. The philosopher speaks to us about this theme in *Discourses* 1.16, which is entitled "On Providence":

> (7) And certainly, by Zeus and by the gods, one of the things produced by Nature leads the worthy and grateful man to perceive Providence. (8) And do not speak to me now about the great things. Even the emergence of milk from the pasture; and, from milk, cheese; and, from the skin, wool . . . (9) Come on! Let us leave the works of Nature, let us contemplate its works incidental . . . (15) These are the only works of Providence under our charge. And what discourse is enough, then, to similarly praise or present these works? For if we possess intellect, what must we do, both in public and in private, if not to celebrate in songs, to praise God, and to give thanks for his graces? (16) It is not necessary, when plowing, sowing, and eating, to sing a hymn to God "Great is God, who has granted us these instruments with which we till the earth; (17) great is God, who has given us hands, who has given us the ability to eat, who has given us the belly, who has given us the ability to grow without noticing, who has given us the ability to breathe while we sleep!" (18) It is necessary to sing a hymn about each of these things, and the best and most divine hymn because God has given us the ability to understand them and, through it, the ability to use them. (19) And so, since many of you are blind, there must be someone who fulfills this role and sings for all the hymn to God? (20) For what can an old lame man do but sing a hymn to God. If I were a nightingale, I would sing the nightingale's songs. If I were a swan, I would

> sing the swan's songs. Now, I am a rational [animal]. I must sing a hymn to God. That is my work. I will fulfill it. I will not abandon this post that has been given to me. And I invite you to the same ode![20]

In a correlated and ironic manner, in *Discourses* 2.20.32, Epictetus refers to those who do not believe in the gods as "grateful men with a sense of modesty," who "eat bread every day and do not know if Demeter[21] exists, who enjoy everything that the Cosmos offers them without any sense of gratitude and even spread among the youth the doctrines that prescribe such ingratitude." In *Discourses* 2.23.5, Epictetus refers to the act of being grateful both in relation to the unimpeded natural capacity for choice and to the other things of the Cosmos that contribute to our existence:

> Man, do not be ungrateful or forgetful of the best things, but be grateful for your vision, for your hearing and . . . for your own life and for the things that cooperate with it, for dried fruits, for wine, for olive oil. Remember that he gave you another something better than all of these, that evaluates their usefulness, that tests them, that calculates the value of each one of them.[22]

Epictetus prescribes gratitude even regarding the fact that there is philosophy that teaches human beings what true happiness is:

> We offer sacrifices because [the gods] gave us the vineyards or the wheat, but we do not give thanks to God because He produced fruit of such quality in the human mind, by which He predestined to show you the truth about happiness?[23]

[20] Ibid., 1.16.15–20.

[21] Daughter of Cronos and Rhea and goddess of harvests and agriculture.

[22] Epictetus, *Discourses* 2.23.5 (my translation). Epictetus refers here to the capacity for choice. Later, he states that anyone who does not value this capacity is ignorant, impious, and ungrateful towards God (ibid., 2.23.23.4).

[23] Ibid., 1.4.32.5. Epictetus refers to the philosophy that Chrysippus left us.

And it is also necessary for the human being to give thanks for its mortal nature. Once again, a comprehensive vision is required, for, to our Stoic, it is necessary that the elders die to make way for the younger ones:

> Do you not want, then, for the time that is given, to contemplate the solemn procession and the festival, and then, when you leave, to go on being obedient and grateful for what you heard and saw . . . Perhaps also in Olympia other athletes may fight, but the solemn procession has its end: go out, departing from life as a grateful man, as a man who has a sense of modesty, making room for another. It is also necessary for others to be born, just as you were born, and those who are born need land and houses.[24]

In short, for Epictetus, only the human being who, applying the Ontological Theorem, removes their good and their evil from external things (which are neither good nor bad) and places them in things that are under their control (the capacity of choice and the operations associated with it; judgment, desire, impulse, and the use of representations) can be grateful to God. Furthermore, one must be able to perceive the action of Divine Providence in the Cosmos and recognize God as their benefactor, seeing oneself as predestined to be free and being aware that external things taken together are materials to concretize, through reflection and action, their freedom, as well as an opportunity to develop morally.

[24] Ibid., 4.1.105-106.

The Action Topic

THE HUMAN ROLE OF PARTICIPATING IN DIVINE INTELLIGENCE

I mentioned above the theory of the four roles of Panaetius. In Epictetus, we see this view reflected and somewhat expanded. The human role of participating in Divine Intelligence, to which we referred in the previous section, requires a decision on the part of the individual to follow. In Stoicism, from Posidonius onwards, humans are no longer seen as mere beings endowed with reason, but as complex and, in a way, contradictory animals, partly irrational in terms of their appetites, emotional ties, instinct for self-preservation, and search for recognition, partly divine because they have within themselves a fragment of Divine Intelligence that allows them to understand the Cosmos and to interconnect, through this intelligence, with Nature.

Epictetus would say that we must choose between our divine, happy, and free lineage and our animal, unhappy, and mortal lineage:

> (1) If the philosophers' sayings about the kinship of gods and humans are true, what remains for humans but to repeat Socrates' saying, who, when asked where he was from, never said Athenian or Corinthian, but citizen of the Cosmos (2) Why do you yourself say you are Athenian and not just declare in which corner of the world your tiny body was thrown at birth? (3) Is it not evident that you call yourself Athenian or Corinthian for what is most important and that encompasses not only this very corner, but also your entire family and, in short, the lineage from which your ancestors descended until they reached you (4) Therefore, why does not one call oneself "citizen of the Cosmos" who has understood the administration of the Cosmos and learned that "the greatest, most important, and most universal system of all is composed of humans and God, from which the seeds were thrown that generated not

> only my father and my grandfather, but all things that arose and grew on the earth, especially the rational animals, (5) because these are by nature the ones who form a community with God, intertwined by reason in a common life. (6) Why does such a human not call himself a "child of God?" Why would he still fear anything that happens to humans?[25]

Epictetus emphasizes that, when we recognize ourselves as participants of Divine Intelligence, we ascend to the cosmic sphere, leaving behind the fragmented vision about ourselves and the world. This Intelligence, which we share with God, reconnects us to other humans and the nature around us. Through this comprehensive understanding of reality, we obtain cosmic citizenship, that is, we gain access to Cosmopolis, which is not a concrete or utopian city, but a state of common spirit to everyone who understands themselves as an integral part of the Cosmos.

Assuming such a stance before the world implies understanding the precision of performing the difficult task of acting appropriately in all life situations, thus, the role of participating in Divine Intelligence will serve as a robe upon which the costumes of the other roles assigned to us will be placed. When we assume our place as sons and daughters of Divinity, we no longer have a partial or selfish understanding of our situation in the world. We know that we are part of the Cosmos, we know that other humans are our brothers and sisters in Divinity, sharing the same Divine Intelligence. We begin to see the world in perspective, as an organized whole, intelligent and full of life. We acquire, therefore, a spirituality[26] that elevates us above mere mortality and allows us to face with equanimity the things that happen to us. As Epictetus himself asserts:

[25] Epictetus, *Discourses* 1.9.

[26] In the sense here of worldview.

> (24) How then, is said, of external things, that some are according to nature and others against nature Just as we say "separated." Because I say that it is according to the nature of the foot to be clean. But if you take it as a foot and not separated, it will be convenient for it both to enter the mud, and to be hurt by a thorn, and sometimes also to be amputated for [the good of] the whole. Otherwise, it will not be a foot. It is necessary to suppose something similar about ourselves. What is to be human? If you consider yourself as something separate, it is according to nature to live until old age, to enrich yourself, to be healthy. But if you consider yourself as human and part of a whole, for this whole it is sometimes convenient for you to get sick, sometimes to sail and be in danger, sometimes to go through necessity and sometimes to die before the hour. Why do you get so irritated? Don't you know that it's nothing more than a foot? Thus, are you not human? Are you not part of the city? First, of the gods and humans; second, of this one that is said to be the closest, which is a small imitation of the totality?[27]

With these words, he states that everything that happens in the world occurs according to Universal Nature, although many things affect our individual nature. This is because our individual natures are not separate, which is why many things that happen seem intentionally or malignantly opposed to us, which is not the case. For example, if a tree falls on someone and causes them injuries, we should not see such a fact as something determinated by Nature against that individual. The tree fell due to natural causes, and the individual simply happened to be in the wrong place, just as a foot gets muddy or cut because someone needs to cross difficult terrain. Likewise, we are often targeted by other human beings, being robbed, assaulted, unjustly treated, and sometimes even killed. Once again, there was a conjunction of factors that led us to encounter harmful people and not recognize them as such. The

[27] Epictetus, *Discourses* 1.9.

harmful people—those who act selfishly and without awareness of the whole—are so because they cannot be otherwise. We, who do not recognize them as such and innocently encountered them, could not protect ourselves either. In short, things are as they are because they could not be otherwise. This does not mean that they happen by divine decree, but that they occur as side effects of the networks of cosmic causality. In the realm of corporeality, when we interact with inanimate beings and irrational animals, the laws of physics and biology determine the causal networks. In the realm of human relationships, the causes of actions are ultimately the beliefs, opinions, and assumptions to which assent is given. Epictetus illustrates what I have just said with the example of parents:

> Appropriate actions are generally measured by relations. Is he your father? This implies taking care of him and tolerating him when he insults you, when he beats you. 'But he's a bad father.' Does Nature determine that you have a good father? No, but that you have a father. 'My brother is unfair to me.' Then maintain your own position in relation to him. So that your will is in accordance with nature, do not contemplate what he does, but what is given for you to do. For if you do not wish it, no one will cause you harm, but you will suffer harm when you suppose you have suffered harm. In this way, then, you will discover the appropriate actions towards the neighbor, towards the citizen, towards the general: if you become accustomed to considering the relations.[28]

In this brilliant passage from the *Enchiridion*, Epictetus highlights that nature determines that we have parents, but it does not determine the characters of our fathers and mothers, characters that are defined by the opinions to which they give assent. It becomes clear why we must accept things that are not under our control just

[28] Epictetus, *Enchiridion,* 30.

as they are: they could not be otherwise. This acceptance certainly does not imply passivity in the face of them, but it warns us that we can only act properly in relation to them by accepting them as they are in fact.

Such a posture entails a state of equanimous and benevolent spirit in the face of facts. Did we get sick? It is proper to humans, it is necessary for one or the other to be afflicted with illnesses, some more serious, some less. Did we die young? It is proper to humans, once alive, to die at any moment, as life does not give guarantees. Did our parents, our friends, our siblings, our colleagues act badly towards us or do not like us? They could not be better than they are, and no one is obliged to love us, even if they are close to us by ties of kinship. Thus, we rid ourselves of anger and hatred and make our will[29] conform to the divine desire. As Epictetus beautifully summarizes: "Do not wish for events to happen as you wish, but wish for them to happen as they do, and your life will have a serene course."[30]

Having freed ourselves from the limited and selfish view of reality, we can visualize the appropriate actions (in Greek, *ta kathekonta*) for each situation. An appropriate action refers to a certain role assigned to us (such as father, mother, son, daughter, brother, sister, neighbor, fellow citizen), situating us at one of the poles of a particular relationship. In each of these cases, as the philosopher emphasizes in the above sentence, we should not react according to what another does to us, for this would be the attitude of someone with a narrow and partial view of reality, but rather visualize and adequately perform each role that falls to us within the different relationships. Acting appropriately means that we should not act reactively, as in the case where we simply retaliate against an injustice suffered, but that we should do what falls to us within that relationship. For example, even if our brother has not

[29] Strictly speaking, our ability to choose, the *prohairesis*.

[30] Ibid., 8. The phrase by Epictetus defines *Amor Fati*, the love of fate (see below). Epictetus refers to those things inherent to the human condition with the expression *t'anthropina*.

been fraternal with us, we should, as much as possible, be fraternal with him. Stoicism here strictly follows the thought of Socrates, according to which it is better to suffer an injustice than to commit one, or, in other terms, that we should not allow the injustices we suffer to make us unjust as well.[31] Thus, within the scope of our interiority, entering cosmic citizenship means overcoming our previous, partial, selfish, egocentric, and often paranoid worldview, and achieving an equanimous spirituality towards natural facts and benevolence towards humanity.

LIFE AS A PLAY AND US AS ITS ACTORS

Epictetus reflects on the third role mentioned by Panaetius: the role imposed by circumstances, by which some are born into wealth and others into poverty, with these or those physical characteristics, in this or that country, in this or that century, having a long or short life, troubled or peaceful, with health or with illnesses. Obviously, none of this happens by our own deliberation. We do not choose where we are born, nor when, we do not choose our parents, our social class, our body, or whether we are healthy or not.

Epictetus offers us the metaphor of the playwright, who would be Divinity itself, assigning roles to each of us. Obviously, according to Stoic doctrine, the Divine Intelligence always operates within the generic realm, whence we can say that many of these roles are side effects, fruits of Fortune. Otherwise, we would have God determining that children die of cancer. Obviously, if such things occur as they do, they are not divine determinations, but undesired effects of the providential acts of a Divinity with whom we share not only intelligence but also imperfection. Once again, we must fulfill the role that has been assigned to us with devotion:

[31] Regarding that, I refer the reader to Plato's *Apology of Socrates*.

> Remember that you are an actor in the play that the Master desires:[32] if He wants it short, it will be short; if long, it will be long; if He desires you to interpret the role of a beggar, it is for you to interpret that role skillfully. And likewise, whether lame, magistrate, or lay man. For this is yours: to beautifully interpret the role that is given to you. But it is up to someone else to choose it.[33]

Epictetus and Seneca offer us paraphrases of Cleanthes's[34] prayer that help us face circumstances virtuously. Here is Seneca's version:

> Guide me, O Supreme Father and Lord of the World,
> To wherever you want, no obstacle will prevent me from following you.
> Diligent, I'll be by your side. And if I don't want to do it,
> I'll endure reluctantly what I could do willingly.
> Destiny leads those who obey it and drags those who oppose it.[35]

Here's the version Arrian presents in Epictetus' *Enchiridion*:

> Lead me, Zeus, and you too, Destiny,
> to the place to which one day I was appointed.
> I, diligent, will follow you – and if, becoming bad,
> I don't want to, still I will follow you.[36]

Arrian still adds two quotes emphasizing the *Amor Fati*:[37]

32 This is, the Divinity.

33 Epictetus, *Enchiridion* 17.

34 For further information, see: Leite, D. C. N. A. *Cleantes de Assos, an introduction with translation and notes*. Unpublished doctoral thesis. São Paulo: Faculty of Philosophy, Letters, and Human Sciences of USP, 2020. Available online at: httww.ts available/8/8143/tde-18112020-202228/en.php 149 Seneca, Letter 107.

35 Seneca, *Letter* 107.

36 Epictetus, *Enchiridion,* 53.

37 As Hadot (1998) summarizes, "wish nothing that isn't."

> He who, in a just manner, yields to necessity
> Is, for us, wise and knowledgeable of divine things.[38]
> Crito, if the gods wished it, so be it.
> Anito and Meleto can kill me, but they cannot harm me.[39]

All of these are expressions of *Amor Fati*, which is only fully achieved when one fully conforms his choice to divine desire. However, as this is something only attainable by the ideal sage, it is necessary that we constantly have these phrases on the tip of our tongue and recite them in the manner of a prayer (whether aloud or repeating them in our own soul) during the facing of difficult circumstances.

COMMUNITARY ACTION

Understanding that we are part of the cosmic community also implies understanding that we are members of the human community. For the Stoics, as we have seen, we live in a great cosmic city inhabited by gods and humans. Therefore, Epictetus tells us:

> Are you not a human part of the city? First, of the gods and humans, then of this one that is called the closest, which is a small imitation of the whole?[40]

The thesis of the brotherhood of all humans unfolds with simplicity from there: if we live in a great universal city directed by the gods, and if humans are sons and daughters of the gods, then humans are all brothers and sisters. Cicero states that, for the Stoics,[41] the community among humans has its origin in the affection, created

[38] Euripides, *fragment* 965 (Nauck). These words substantiate the meaning of Cleanthes's verses.

[39] Plato, *Crito*, 43 d (slightly modified). For this there is an elegant sentence in Latin: *Di Melius*, which means "the Gods [willed] better." Socrates's saying manifests his serene acceptance of fate.

[40] Epictetus, *Discourses,* 2.5.27.

[41] For further details on the Stoic doctrine we mention below, read my article entitled "*Koinonia* cosmica e antropologica em Epicteto", available at: https://digitalis-dsp.uc.pt/bitstream/10316.2/40859/1/Koinonia%20cosmica%20e%20antropologica%20em%20Epicteto.pdf

by nature, of parents for their children,[42] which can be observed by the fact that human bodies are naturally constituted for procreation and, consequently, for the loving upbringing of children. Cicero places the impulses for the establishment of affective bonds and for community in the same realm as our aversion to pain: "Just as, by nature, we have an aversion to pain, so it seems that we are driven by nature itself to love those whom we have begotten."[43]

A famous fragment that has come down to us from Hierocles,[44] preserved by Stobaeus,[45] speaks of the concentric circles of human affection: the first is that of our own thoughts, of our body and everything that is useful to it; the second is that which encompasses our parents, siblings, husband, wife, sons, daughters; the third, that of our uncles and aunts, grandparents, nephews, and cousins; the fourth, which includes our other relatives; the fifth, relative to the inhabitants of our city; the sixth, of ethnicity or nation; the seventh, that which encompasses all humans.

42 Cícero, *De Finibus*, 3.19.62.

43 Idem.

44 Hierocles (fl. 2nd century) became famous for his work *Elements of Ethics*, partly rediscovered in a papyrus in Hermopolis in 1901 (see Aulus Gellius, *Attic Nights*, ix.5.8). Here is the fragment: "Each one of us is circumscribed by many circles; some are smaller, others are larger; some comprehend, others are comprehended [...]. For the first one, indeed, is the closest circle, which everyone describes containing their own mind as a center surrounded by the body, and whatever is supposed to be good for the body [...]. The second, which is at a greater distance from the center and comprehends the first circle, is the one in which parents, siblings, spouse, and children are arranged. The third circle from the center is the one that contains uncles and aunts, grandparents, and the children of siblings [...]. Next comes that which contains ordinary individuals. Then what comprises members of the same tribe, then what contains citizens; and then two other circles follow, one being the circle of those who dwell near the city and the other of those of the same province. But the outermost and largest circle, which comprises all the other circles, is that of the whole human race [...] and the province of the one who strives to behave appropriately in each of these connections to gather, in a certain way, the circles, so to speak, to a center, and always strive seriously to transfer oneself from comprehensive circles to the various individuals they comprehend." Hierocles (Stobaeus, Anthology 4.84.23; 3:134,1-136,2 Meineke; cf. Anth. 4.27.23).

45 Stobaeus, *Anthology*, 4.84.23. Cf. 4.27.23 = 4.671.3–673.18 Wachsmuth and Hense. This is a fragment from the treaty entitled "How should we behave towards our relatives."

THE CIRCLES OF HIEROCLES

Hierocles ponders that it takes an effort for appropriation to proceed to the last circle, since, by nature, appropriation by affection is more intense until the second circle, gradually losing strength thereafter. But we can inquire: how to make this effort? Hierocles recommends calling uncles and aunts "fathers" and "mothers," cousins "brothers" and "sisters," so that the use of the name awakens and intensifies affection. In fact, in religious circles, it is common for everyone to call each other "brothers" and "sisters," seeking this effect.

However, Hierocles acknowledges that, to extend affection to the outermost circles, it is necessary to dedicate oneself to philosophy. In other words, it is necessary to replace the inner discourse, which is provided to us by common sense, with the discourse of Stoicism, which advocates human brotherhood and its divine lineage.

On the other hand, Epictetus, in the *Discourses*, tells us that he would like to believe in the thesis of the brotherhood of all humans even if it were false. It seems that Epictetus wants to tell us that this question goes beyond reason, that an educational effort is necessary that involves not only arguments and theory, but also—and mainly—putting this theory into practice, bringing together humans of different ethnicities so that, living in communion, they develop emotional bonds from the earliest childhood and, consequently, live as siblings. Perhaps this was the longing of Martin Luther King when he said he dreamed of a day when black and white children would live side by side.[46]

Naturally, it is beyond our power, as individuals and mere citizens, to accomplish it on a large scale. But it is also true that we can embody such principles to the extent of our abilities. In simple terms, we will achieve this if our actions are not (1) anti-social and (2) contribute to the common good.

[46] "I have a dream that one day out in the red hills of Georgia the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slaveowners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood." This sentence is from the famous *I Have a Dream* speech by Martin Luther King Jr., delivered on August 28, 1963, during the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom.

Anti-social actions (1) include not only crimes listed in the penal codes, but also all kinds of attitudes that harm the common good, from serious crimes to minor infractions such as, for example, littering in public areas and even being rude to a passerby.

The actions that (2) collaborate for the common good are those undertaken by those who perceive themselves as true members of a community and include striving in their profession, their family roles (such as father, mother, son, daughter, etc.), and social roles (such as friend, citizen, voter, politician, etc.). In short, we collaborate for the common good to the exact extent that we adequately fulfill the roles assigned to us.

So, if you are, for example, the owner of a small business, such as a bakery, by managing your company well, generating jobs, and offering good services to the community, you will be benefiting, in addition to your own family, the entire community. As Musonius Rufus tells us:

> Human nature is very much like that of bees. A bee cannot live alone, for once isolated, it dies. In fact, it intends to perform the task common to members of its species – to work and act together with other bees.[47]

In the same way, as Marcus Aurelius brilliantly synthesizes, "what is not good for the beehive cannot be good for the bee."[48] Let us memorize this phrase as a rule to inspire us in our actions.

The attitude of the Roman senator and philosopher, Helvidius Priscus,[49] exemplifies what it means to fulfill a certain role that is assigned to us:

47 Musonius Rufus, *Diatribes*, 18 A.3.

48 Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*, 6.54.

49 Helvidius Priscus was a Stoic philosopher who lived under Nero, Galba, Otho, Vitellius, and Vespasian. Under Nero, he was a quaestor of Achaea and tribune of the plebs (56 AD). He restored order and peace in Armenia. He was banished in 66 due to his sympathy for Brutus and Cassius. Galba brought him back from exile in 68, but he was banished again and subsequently executed by Vespasian.

> When Vespasian sent him a request not to attend the Senate, Priscus replied:
>
> – It depends on you not to allow me to be a senator. But, as far as I am one, I must attend.
>
> – Go – said Vespasiano –, but when you come, stay silent.
>
> – Don't question me and I'll remain silent.
>
> – But I must interrogate you.
>
> – And I must say what seems fair to me.
>
> – If you speak, I will condemn you to death.
>
> – When I told you that I am immortal, You will do what is yours, I will do what is mine. Yours is condemning me to death. Mine is to die without trembling. Yours is condemning me to exile. Mine is to withdraw without being distressed.[50]

Helvidius Priscus was a senator and acted as such, fulfilling his role with courage. Vespasian asks him not to go to the Senate session. Helvidius refuses because his role as a senator implies attending Senate sessions. Vespasian then asks him to remain silent. Helvidius replies that he will only do so if he is not interrogated. Vespasian says he will interrogate him, to which Helvidius responds that he will do what seems correct to him. Vespasian threatens him with death, and Helvidius courageously tells him that it is something that concerns Vespasian, because what he must do, as a senator, is what he deems just.

We should also practice, whenever possible, benevolence and charity towards others. As Seneca tells us:

> What virtue do we admire more than benevolence? What do we encourage more? Who should applaud more than us, the Stoics, who preach the brotherhood of the human race?[51]

[50] *Discourses*, 1.2.19 ss.

[51] Seneca, *On Benefits*, 1.15.2. Trans. George Felipe Borges and Brenner Brunetto Silveira.

As Seneca observes in *De Ira* [On Anger], we were created for mutual aid and union,[52] which is why we feel happy when benefiting someone, as we fulfill our own nature through such acts.

COSMOPOLITANISM

In Classical Antiquity and the Hellenistic and Roman periods, the Stoics acted discreetly in moral terms. We do not see them urging the crowd to convert to Stoicism. One of the foundations of this posture is that the Stoics, heirs of Socratic thought, consider that progress through philosophy must be sought by free choice. They did indeed propagate their teachings (through dissemination texts and public lectures), but they explained them only to those who, by their own will, sought them. Philosophical exercise must be carried out uncoerced.[53] The practitioner of Stoicism should only do something and only refrain from doing something when they know the reason for doing or not doing it. The process of moral development presupposes a free individual who is willing to undertake it voluntarily. Training, which does not take enlightenment into account, is outside of this process, since it cannot be a proper action of a free human being to do something not knowing why it is right, but only because someone determines it coercively.

The Stoics lived, during Roman times, in cosmopolitan societies that sheltered people from the most varied religions and cultures, such as Jews, Egyptians, Greeks, Phoenicians, Romans, among others, who lived together, at the same time maintaining their own customs and religions, interacting and influencing each other. Epictetus has this in mind when saying, in chapter 31 of the *Enchiridion*, that "it is fitting for everyone to make libations, offer sacrifices and first fruits according to ancestral custom." "According to ancestral custom" means according to the customs of each one's ancestors, that is, of their nation, their culture, and their race.

52 Seneca, *On Anger*, 2.5.

53 As Epictetus makes clear in the first chapter of the *Enchiridion*: "Make use solely of impulse and counter-impulse, without, however, exceeding yourself, with reserve and without constraint."

The Stoics, thus, acknowledge the irreducible plurality of customs and religions, without, however, reducing themselves to relativism. They understand that different customs arise in different parts of the world, but at the same time, justice and equity are common aspirations for all humans, which, moreover, makes possible common life and peaceful interaction among them despite cultural differences.

The Stoics never set out to be moral reformers, judges of humans, and champions of morality, for, like few others, they understand that possessing philosophical knowledge does not automatically result in moral stature to reform or morally judge other humans. They understand that few humans actually achieve such moral stature and see Socrates as one of the so-called wise men.

"Moral stature" means here the quality of someone who is guided by reason and the best human feelings, the quality of someone who rarely errs, who is not dragged by vices, and who stands out for their fearless attitudes in defense of the best in humanity. For the Stoics, those who do not possess this moral stature have no authority to recriminate others. And, curiously, even those who are recognized to possess it are very cautious to use this prerogative. Socrates, for example, solemnly refused it, limiting himself to show that those who believed to possess wisdom both deceived themselves and others.

Instead of trying to modify others through moralistic speeches, the Stoics sought to give life to the principles studied, as Epictetus makes clear in chapter 46 of his *Enchiridion*:

> Never declare yourself a philosopher nor speak frequently with those who are ignorant of philosophy about philosophical principles—do the things that follow from these principles. At a banquet, for example, do not say how one should eat, but eat as one should. Remember that Socrates set aside demonstrations to such an extent that those who yearned to know the philosophers would come to him—and he would

> lead them, thus tolerating being disregarded. If a discussion about philosophical principles arises among ordinary men, remain silent most of the time. For there is great danger in regurgitating what you have not yet digested. And when someone tells you that you know nothing and you are not offended, know, at that moment, that you have begun to act. Sheep do not take what they have grazed to the shepherds, showing how much they have eaten, but, by digesting what they have grazed inside, they bring forth wool and milk. Similarly, do not exhibit philosophical principles to ordinary men, but, by digesting them, perform the actions that follow from them.[54]

The Stoics want to be living examples of their philosophy, standing out from others by their actions, not by their words. As we have seen, their action in society consists of performing well the roles assigned to them and always acting communally, that is, with a view to the common good, which includes their own well-being.

Another reason why the Stoics do not devote themselves to moral reinforcement is that, even for those who have the moral stature for it, the task is difficult and the result uncertain. Most do not listen to them, nor will they ever be interested in listening to them. Their recognition is slow, and the resistances that arise before them are enormous. If it is like this for the great souls who have such prerogative, imagine for us, miserable mortals.

The Stoics emphasize that we cannot morally judge others without knowing why they act or think in this or that way. Epictetus again clarifies this in chapter 45 of his *Manual*:

> Someone bathes hastily: do not say that he bathes badly, but hastily. Someone drinks a lot of wine: do not say that he drinks badly, but excessively. How can you know that he does it badly before discerning his opinion?[55]

54 Epictetus, *Enchiridion*, 46.
55 Ibid., 45.

We can only judge someone morally if we know the premises that lead them to act or think in one way or another. To do so, we must know their beliefs, the particularities of their upbringing, their cultural context, their era, etc. The Stoics, therefore, avoid passing judgment on other humans, but seek instead to understand the reasons that led them to be as they are and to act as they do. Thus, instead of moral judgment, they seek to benevolently understand humanity.

Finally, the ultimate reason why they do not devote themselves to moral reformism is its complete uselessness. It is difficult to abandon assent, that is, to cease believing in something in which we once placed our belief, because our beliefs are linked to one another, forming a web, and abandoning a rooted belief also means putting many others into question, which is not an easy task. And, in truth, the philosophical work par excellence of Socrates is to scrutinize all our beliefs.

To criticize a deeply rooted belief causes an immediate reaction of resistance, just as Socrates himself recognized having experienced during his philosophical activity through the streets of Athens.[56] By and large, the moral reformer will receive a false assent from an interlocutor who merely wants to rid themselves of an embarrassing and unpleasant situation. In all cases, the threat will hardly lead to a positive result. Thought is the seat of human freedom, and the best way to approach it is through gentle persuasion—better, undoubtedly, but not necessarily efficient, it must be said. Here is how Marcus Aurelius brilliantly summarizes the issue:

> How petty are these pygmies entrenched in politics and considering themselves great philosophers! . . . What do you say? Man, do what nature asks of you . . . Do not expect to accomplish Plato's *Republic*; it is enough to make a little progress, and do not think that this small result is insignificant. To make men change their principles, who can do it? And if

[56] Plato, *Apology of Socrates*.

> they do not change, what else is their life but the servitude of individuals who go around groaning and pretending to be very obedient? . . . Simple and modest is the philosopher's conduct.[57]

Therefore, a Stoic will not go around bothering anyone with their philosophy, seeking to convince and gain acceptance, but will fulfill well the roles assigned to them. If, by chance, they are a politician, they will propose equitable and just laws and seek to implement, as far as possible, the common good, without however deluding themselves with utopias. The Stoics know that a perfect world requires perfect humans, like the Republic of Zeno, in which everyone is equally wise and free. But they also know that the human world is a world of imperfections and passions, and that the perfect Stoic sage is only an ideal. And that even those who deserved to receive the epithet "wise" recognize themselves to be below the ideal because they perceive within themselves the flux of passions, which is the common field to all humans.

Stoic cosmopolitanism, therefore, refers: first, to the already mentioned cosmic citizenship, which translates into a spirituality whereby the individual perceives themselves as belonging to the cosmic community in which they fulfill the role of a participant in the Divine Intelligence; second, to the Stoic's benevolent and impartial view of humanity, capable of understanding the diversity of religions and customs and of respecting this diversity and the natural progression of things, intervening only when strictly necessary and according to the roles assigned to them in society.[58] This benevolent, impartial, and non-intrusive view also implies that the Stoic will not flaunt their philosophical principles before others but will live in accordance with them, acting according to the principles of their philosophy and being a good example to others.

57 Marcus Aurelius, 9.29, translation by João Maia (RTP, Lisbon, 1971).

58 That is, as a politician, voter, teacher, etc.

The Persuasion Topic

THE STOIC THEORY OF REPRESENTATION APPLIED TO PERSUASIVE REPRESENTATIONS

Epictetus refers to this topic in Chapter 1 of the *Enchiridion*:

> So, practice saying to every harsh representation: 'You are just a representation, and by no means what you represent.' Then, examine it and judge it by these rules that you possess. First and foremost, if this is or is not under your control. If it is not, you have the hand that "nothing is in relation to me."[59]

"Rough representation" is translated from *phantasia tracheia*, which refers to both untested representation and to certain representations that are particularly persuasive to us, that is, which intensely affect us, such as the sight of someone sexually attractive, the perception of an imminent danger, catching a glimpse of a tasty dish, hearing the noise of the dentist's drill approaching, or realizing oneself in a powerful or obscure position.

But how does this persuasion occur? Epictetus reserves the third topic for those who have already mastered the first two, that is, those who have both corrected their judgments about what is good and bad and now understand themselves as important parts of a living and organic totality, feeling grateful for it (first topic), as well as those who fulfill well the roles assigned to them, always acting with a view to the common good (second topic).

If we were purely intellectual beings, the task of moral reconstruction would be accomplished after putting into practice the first two topics, for we would be completely free from passions and errors. However, as we have already seen, Epictetus recognizes that, on one hand, we share with Divinity the Divine Intelligence that interconnects everything, but on the other, we also share our

[59] Epictetus, *Enchiridion*, 1.

bodies with animals, bodies that incessantly send us passionate movements which, once assented to, turn into passions. These passionate movements come to us through intense ("rough") representations and are difficult to restrain, even if we have corrected our judgments about things, because their intensity compels us to believe that the represented things are good or bad, when in fact, they are not.

For this reason, Epictetus tells us that the third topic refers to the persuasiveness of representations and to assent. These intense representations are like traps, seeming to be what they are not.

To deal with them, Epictetus reserves advanced studies of logic. As we have seen, the Stoics include among the studies of logic the theory of knowledge, which refers to the study of representation. Representation (*phantasia*, in Greek) has two facets: the perceptive (the perceptual content that affects us through the senses) and the propositional (the logically and linguistically articulated content that interprets the sensory data). For example, if I see a tree, my thought immediately associates the vision of the tree with the concept of tree, along with my value judgment about it (beautiful, ugly, useful, useless, etc.).

Thus, returning to the quote from Chapter 1 of the *Enchiridion*, Epictetus recommends that we say to each raw (or intense) representation: "It is a representation and by no means what it presents itself as." This means that we should establish a distinction between what we perceive through the senses and the interpretation we make of it. For example, if we see a snake and we are horrified of snakes, our soul tells us, "There is a horrible snake." However, the judgment "this snake is horrible" does not come to us through the senses, but originates from our own soul, which judges the sight of the reptile in this way. The same thing happens when we glimpse someone sexually attractive: the person is not attractive in themselves, as sex appeal is something we attribute to them, and it would not be perceived, for example, by a lion, which would only

see them as a threat or a meal. Then, Epictetus adds that we should examine and judge the intense representation with the Ontological Theorem[60] and check if the perception refers to something under our control or not. In the first case, it would be a judgment, an assumption, and we could examine it through the tools provided by the first topic. In the second case, if it is one of the things that are not under our control, we must say to it: "You are nothing to me."[61] This means that we must be aware that it is neither good nor bad, as these are properties of things that are under our control, that is, our mental operations. Having done that, we can apply to this representation of something exterior what Epictetus calls the "test of representations."

THE STAGES OF THE REPRESENTATION TEST

Epictetus divides the representation test into three different stages:

THE FIRST STAGE: *giving oneself time*. This means waiting for the intensity of the representation to decrease so that reason can confront it. In ordinary life, we usually say that, in difficult situations, it is necessary to "count to three." Epictetus adheres to this common wisdom, since the initial passionate impulses tend to subside after some time (such as those of anger, desires, etc.). Once the initial impulses have been appeased, intelligence can turn to them and investigate them. Otherwise, a hasty assent would be given, reason would be overwhelmed, and what was only a passionate movement would fully become a passion.[62]

THE SECOND STAGE: *separating sensory data from the judgment made about it*. In the case of something that is not our concern, we must add the perception that it is nothing to us, that is, suspend the value judgments we have made about it based on the intensity

[60] That, as we have seen above, makes a distinction between the things that are under our control (our opinions and assumptions, our impulses, and the use we make of representations) and those that are not under our control (all other things, including our own bodies).

[61] Epictetus, *Enchiridion*, 1.

[62] Epictetus, *Discourses*, 2.18.24-25.

of the representation (which enchants or oppresses us, leading us to believe that the thing is good or bad in itself) and tell ourselves that the thing has no value in itself. As we have seen above, this means that it is material for choice, that is, we can make good use of it. Having done this, we can start the next stage of the test.

THE THIRD STAGE: *select a virtue to deal with the object of intense representation*. For the Stoics, virtues are knowledge that allow us to deal with things and humans appropriately. Epictetus refers to this third stage in the *Enchiridion*:

> Regarding everything that happens to you, remember, turning to yourself, to seek some excellence that serves for each of them. If you see a handsome man or a beautiful woman, you will discover that the capacity in relation to these is self-control; if you find yourself facing an exhausting task, such capacity will be perseverance; if you are the target of insult, you will discover that such capacity is patience. By becoming accustomed to these modes, representations will not drag you down.[63]

"Excellence" is translated from *arete*, which we also sometimes render as "virtue." Epictetus asserts that we should make use of a virtue to deal well with each thing that happens to us. Faced with someone sexually attractive, we must practice the virtue of self-control (in Greek, *enkrateia*). Having a great task ahead, we must equip ourselves with perseverance (in Greek, *karteria*). Faced with insults, patience (in Greek, *anexikakia*), so that we do not lower ourselves, returning insult for insult and losing control of the situation.[64]

[63] Epictetus, *Enchiridion*, 10.

[64] Epictetus returns to the theme of injury in chapter 20 of the *Enchiridion*: "Remember that it is not what insults or injures you that causes harm, but your opinion about these things as if they were causing harm to you. So, when someone provokes you, know that it is your own judgment that provokes you. For this reason, first of all, take care not to be carried away by the representation: for once you gain time and delay your reaction, you will more easily govern yourself." See also Epictetus, *Enchiridion*, 42.

Finally, Epictetus adds the need of establishing a habit (in Greek, *hexis* or *ethos*) of examining representations and selecting the appropriate virtues for each case, for the passionate movements never cease to reach the soul, the seat of intelligence, the reason why it is necessary to create good habits to deal appropriately with the situations that afflict us the most. Epictetus synthesizes the theme of virtuous action in Chapter 43 of the *Enchiridion*:

> Each thing has two wings: one by which it can be taken and another by which it cannot. For example: if your brother is unjust [towards you], do not take him that way, that is, that he is unjust (for this is an inadequate way of taking him), but rather this way: he is your brother, you were raised together – and thus you will take him in an appropriate manner.[65]

Epictetus makes an analogy between a jug and its two handles, each situation and the two ways to approach it: the appropriate or virtuous way and the inappropriate and vicious way, exemplifying with the already mentioned case of the brother: although he has been unfair to us, we must consider not what he did, but what is the appropriate attitude towards him, considering our role in this relationship.

As for how to act appropriately in the face of others' suffering, Epictetus tells us:

> When you see someone crying in distress, whether it be when their child is absent, or when they have lost their possessions, take care not to be carried away by the impression that they are surrounded by external evils, but have at hand immediately the thought that "it is not the event that distresses this person (for another does not distress another), but rather their opinion about it." However, do not hesitate to show solidarity with them through your words, and if necessary, to mourn with

[65] Ibid., 43.

> them. But be careful not to reach the point of also lamenting inwardly.[66]

Here, Epictetus refers to the distressing situation of seeing someone suffering from the absence of their child or the loss of possessions. The first step is not to let oneself be affected by the other's suffering because if that happens, you will be in the same situation of suffering as the other and will be unable to help them. It is necessary, therefore, to make use of the virtue of solidarity and console them. The situation is analogous to that of a doctor who sees a mother arriving with her seriously injured child in the emergency room of a hospital. The doctor should not suffer and despair along with the mother because if he does, he will not be able to save the life that is in danger. Instead, he must reassure himself inwardly and, armed with his medical knowledge and experience, seek to save the patient's life, acting appropriately as a doctor and benefiting everyone.[67]

In chapter 19 of the *Enchiridion*, Epictetus refers to something that often stirs us with emotion and envy: seeing another in a position of honor and power, and oneself in obscurity and dishonor.

> Care to never let yourself be carried away by the representation and belief that someone you see in honors, or who is very powerful, or who has, in some other way, a good reputation, is happy. For if the nature of good lies in things under our control, there will be no room for envy or jealousy. And you yourself will not wish to be either a general, a magistrate, or a consul, but a free man. There is only one way to achieve this: to despise the things that are not under our control.[68]

[66] Ibid., 16.

[67] This case is good to illustrate the importance of habit, because difficult situations are more easily faced properly if a habit has already been established to deal with similar situations.

[68] Ibid., 19. See also Epictetus, *Enchiridion*, 12-13, 15, 22, and 24-25.

This is a reflection on the fact that power and honor are not inherently good things, and do not constitute anyone's happiness. True happiness, for the Stoics, consists in acting virtuously, becoming free, independent of honors and power.

Many other chapters of the *Enchiridion* refer to this test, and the reader can now read and interpret them from this bias. Let's look at some of them.

To deal virtuously with things and loved ones, we must accustom ourselves to accepting their transient nature.

> About each of the seductive things, which are suitable for use or which are loved, remember to inquire what its nature is, starting with the smallest things. If you like a clay pot, tell yourself: "I like a clay pot," for if it breaks, you will not be disturbed. If you kiss your child or your wife, tell yourself that you are kissing a human being, for when they die, you will not be disturbed.[69]

To properly execute a task, we must focus on the objective so that fortuitous events do not divert our attention:

> When you are about to undertake any task, remember to inquire about its nature. If you go to public baths, consider what happens in the bathhouse: those who splash water, those who bump into each other, those who insult, those who steal. You will undertake the action more securely if you say promptly: "I want to bathe and maintain my will accordingly with nature." And likewise for every action. Therefore, if there's any obstacle to bathing, keep in mind that "I don't want only to bathe, but also to maintain my will in accordance with nature—I won't do this if I get annoyed with events."[70]

[69] Ibid., 19. See also Epictetus, *Enchiridion*, 12-13, 15, 22, and 24-25.
[70] Ibid., 4.

Death itself is not an evil, but, as something external and beyond our control, it can be faced in a good or bad way:

> It is not things that disturb people, but their opinions about things. For example: death is not a terrible thing, or else Socrates would have seen it as such, but terrible is the opinion about death, according to which it is terrible. So, when we are hindered, when we become disturbed or distressed, let us never attribute it to anything other than ourselves—that is, our own opinions.[71]

Let's not boast about things we possess but that do not constitute our nature, for example, our material possessions and circles of friendship and power. We are valued for who we are, that is, for the (virtuous or not) use we make of representations:

> Do not be exalted by any advantage belonging to another. If, when exalting itself, a horse says, "I am beautiful," that is tolerable. But you, when exalting yourself, say, "I own a beautiful horse," know that you are exalting yourself for the sake of the horse. So, what is yours? The use of representations. In this way, when you use representations according to nature, then you exalt yourself: for at that moment, you will exalt yourself for your own good.[72]

Consider what is essential and what is an accessory in your life, and be ready to leave behind everything that is non-essential:

> When the ship anchors on a maritime voyage, if you go to stock up on water at the port, you will pick up a shell and a little fish along the way, it is necessary to keep the thought fixed on the ship and to turn continuously towards it, in case the captain calls you. If that happens, you must abandon everything so that you are not thrown onto the ship tied up

[71] Ibid., 5. On death, see also Epictetus, *Enchiridion*, 21.
[72] Ibid., 6.

> like a sheep. Likewise, life: nothing prevents you from being granted a little wife and a little child instead of a little shell and a little fish. But if the captain calls you, run to the ship and abandon everything without looking back. If you are old, do not stray far from the ship, so that you do not stay behind when the captain calls you.[73]

Diseases hinder the body, but not the ability to choose. It is necessary to evoke virtues, such as perseverance, patience, and courage, to confront illnesses:

> Disease is an obstacle for the body, but not for the will, if it does not want to. Limping is an obstacle for the leg, but not for the will. Say this for everything that happens to you. And you will discover that the obstacle is part of another thing, not of you.[74]

It is necessary to understand that we possess nothing in fact, and everything has only been lent to us:

> Never, concerning anything, say that you lost it, but rather that you returned it. Your son died: he was returned. Your wife died: she was returned. 'Property was taken from me': well then, it too was returned. 'But it's vile who took it.' What matters to you by whom He who offered it to you asked for it back As far as they are to you?[75]

We must, through constant vigilance, take precautions regarding the pleasures that can addict and enslave us:

> When you learn the representation of any pleasure, guard it, as well as with other representations, so that you are not swept

73 Ibid., 7.

74 Ibid., 9.

75 Ibid., 11. As for the appropriate attitude towards omens, see ibid., 28.

> away by it. Let the representation wait for you: grant yourself some time. Remember, then, in these two moments: One, in which you will enjoy pleasure; and another afterward, in which, having enjoyed it, you will regret and criticize yourself. Then compare with those moments how much, by abstaining from that pleasure, you will rejoice and praise yourself. But if the opportune moment arises to undertake the action, beware! Do not let its sweetness, its pleasure, and its seduction overcome you, and compare these to how much better it will be to know oneself victorious.[76]

In all these cases, Epictetus invites us to go beyond mere appearance and understand the real nature of each thing: death is not an evil, but rather a natural fact; wealth and power do not constitute happiness, but are materials upon which choice operates; our loved ones and cherished objects are ephemeral; we must leave behind everything that is simply accessory to us; there are destructive pleasures we must avoid; we must face illnesses with courage; we should not boast of what is not our nature; we possess nothing in fact; our life is like a journey, with a beginning, middle, and end; insult only affects us if we give it power to do so. In all these cases, the virtuous action resulting from the knowledge of the nature of things leads us to a happy life. In all of them, Epictetus denounces a false appearance, something that seems good when it is not, something that seems evil without being so.

The clear connection between knowledge and virtue, and between virtue and action in accordance with reality, is manifested here in Stoicism. The sage knows reality and, therefore, can act appropriately and virtuously in the face of facts. We, as those who progress towards wisdom, must follow this ideal of the sage, unmasking false appearances, accepting the reality of things, and acting virtuously towards them, always aware that we, ourselves, share with everything else its ephemeral character, but that we are also divine

[76] Ibid., 34.

in intelligence and capable of correctly interpreting the world, knowing the reality of things, and, in the brief time granted to us, fulfilling our role as virtuous human beings.[77]

77 The topic of persuasion includes studies of propositional logic and sophisms, which, however, go beyond the scope of the present book. For further insight, see: Dinucci, A; Duarte, V. *et alii*. *Introduction to Stoic propositional logic*. São Cristóvão: EdiUFS, 2016.

4.
How to Write Your Own Handbook of Stoicism

Stoicism is a course of silence.
— João Leite Ribeiro, *Memórias de um estóico*
[Memories of a Stoic]

Examination of Conscience

Diogenes Laertius informs us that Pythagoras recommended to his students that, when entering their homes, they should inquire about the errors they committed during the day and on which occasions they would have acted differently.[1]

Plato appropriates the practice of self-examination by reinterpreting the Greek precept "Know thyself" (in Greek, *gnothi seauton*)

[1] Diogenes Laertius 8.22.

and attributing to it, through Socrates in his early dialogues,[2] the sense of introspective investigation.[3]

Epictetus directly follows the Pythagorean practice, citing twice the part of the *Golden Verses*, attributed to Pythagoras, which concerns such an exercise:

> Let not sleep fall upon thy languid eyes
> Before thou hast reviewed each daily action;
> What was done wrong, what was accomplished, what remains for you to do;
> Examine everything, from the first to the last act and, then,
> Take responsibility for what was done wrongly and rejoice for what was done rightly.[4]

Epictetus also refers to the practice of daily meditation in *Discourses* 1.1.25, reflecting on what response should be given to the tyrant.[5]

Seneca mentions a similar practice, recalling that the Pythagorean Sextius[6] followed it,[7] describing his own nightly routine conducted after his wife has fallen asleep, meditating on the daily events and reflecting on whether he acted virtuously or not. For instances where he fell short, he considers how to improve his future behavior. This exercise involves assessing each case against the standard of virtue and planning for more virtuous responses.[8]

Having the Tenets at Hand

[2] These are: *Apology, Crito, Charmides, Euthyphro, Euthydemus, Lesser Hippias, Ion, Laches, Protagoras, Gorgias*, and *Republic* (book I).

[3] See Plato, *Apology* 21b; *Laches* 187e-188c.

[4] Epictetus, *Discourses*, 3.10.2.. See also ibid., 4.6.32.

[5] See ibid., 4.1.111 and 4.4.7 (17-18).

[6] Quintus Sextius the Elder, whom Seneca often refers to, flourished around 50 BC and was a Roman philosopher who combined Stoicism with Pythagoreanism. See *Moral Letters to Lucilius*, 59.7–8; 64.2–5; 73.12–15; 98.13 and 108.17–18; *On Anger*, 2.36 and 3.36.

[7] Seneca, *On Anger*, 3.36.

[8] Horace also refers to this practice (see *Satires* 1.4.133-9).

For this examination of conscience to be carried out properly, the philosophy student must have at hand—that is, at the tip of the tongue—the main maxims of Stoicism.[9] To do so, it is necessary to undertake an exercise of reading ancient texts, as well as to paraphrase and synthesize the main parts of these works.

Breaking it down, you should read texts, like, for example, *On the Shortness of Life* by Seneca, underlining the parts you consider most important and jotting down in the page margins. After finishing the reading, you should go back to the beginning of the book and jot down in a notebook or journal the previously underlined parts, adding, when you deem necessary, your own observations of the text. Once you've done that, gradually revisit your notes, paraphrasing them, that is, translating the reflections into your own words to internalize the reflection and thus gradually build a new inner discourse.[10]

It is necessary to bear in mind that the objective of this exercise is not to become erudite; its goal is to embody the philosophical principles (the *theoremata*) and progress along the path of being virtuous in action from an inner discourse that is in harmony with reality. In this sense, Epictetus tells us that Socrates himself, when he was not engaged in dialogue about philosophical topics, practiced such exercise in solitude, without any pretensions of boasting about this feat:

> Since it was not always possible to have someone with him who would question his opinions and whom he could question in turn, he questioned himself, examined himself, and exercised his critical thinking skills. The philosopher writes about these practices of self-examination, but leaves the composition of clever phrases to others . . . for the foolish or fortunate ones

9 See Epictetus, *Discourses*, 4.12.7. See also 4.49.49; 3.5.11; 3.26.39; *Enchiridion*, 52.

10 This exercise can also include ancient and modern poems, song lyrics, phrases uttered by famous individuals—in short, everything that relates to the constitution of an inner discourse based on Stoic principles. Marcus Aurelius, for example, sometimes quotes philosophers from other philosophical schools and excerpts from ancient tragedies.

> who have leisure time due to idleness, or for those who are reckless due to madness.[11]

Epictetus emphasizes that the practice of self-examination is the foremost task for the student of philosophy and that self-display should be left to the idle—that is, those who do not dedicate their lives to any valuable task—or to the insane.

Don't Show Off or Consider Yourself Too Wise

The practice of such exercises should not lead us to any fantasies of greatness or that we have acquired true wisdom. We have already seen above that the perfect Stoic sage is only an ideal that serves as guidance for those who progress in self-knowledge, finding imperfect parallels in reality only a few times throughout the ages, in figures like Socrates and Diogenes the Dog, who incarnated this ideal to the extent humanly possible.

According to Plato's *Apology*, Socrates would have received an oracle according to which in the world there would be no human wiser than him. After much reflection, without, however, perceiving in himself any wisdom worthy of the name, Socrates concluded that the oracle could only mean the following: every human who, like him, recognizes that their own wisdom is little or almost nothing compared to divine wisdom, is wise to the extent humanly possible.

This means that all human wisdom shares with the human its fallible, precarious, and unfinished character. Human wisdom, therefore, is presented as a work in progress, which can never be concluded. No human in good conscience will ever declare themselves wise, for such wisdom, perfect and finished, simply is not feasible for mortals. However, we must always keep in mind that

[11] Epictetus, *Discourses*, 2.1.32–3.

these goals are achievable to the extent possible,[12] which is why we must seek our moral progress.

The Stoic philosophers are students of philosophy who progress in wisdom, criticizing not others, but themselves, in a daily exercise through which they gradually eliminate from their souls false conceptions about the world and themselves. For this reason, there will always be a distance between the words of philosophers and their practice. The discourse of duty-being positively influences and gradually modifies what is, changing the individual from their interior. Without the discourse of duty-being, humans would be content with anything, and there would be no progress, neither individual nor collective, for humanity.

This conception about the always imperfect but ever perfectible nature of the human character integrates the daily exercise of self-examination. There's a beautiful paragraph by Seneca (which I know by heart) that synthesizes all that I've just said, including its role in scrutinizing oneself:

> I am not wise, and (so that your malevolence may be appeased) I will not be. Therefore, demand of me not that I be equal to the best, but only better than the wicked. This is sufficient for me: to remove some of my vices daily and correct my errors.[13]

Self-Communion and Self-Forgiveness

An important effect of constituting a new inner discourse in the soul is the establishment of a dialogue with oneself (or soliloquy) that leads to self-knowledge. In this sense, your philosophical diary should include self-consolations, that is, reflections through

[12] Seneca, *On Happy Life*, 17. 3. See also 20.2.

[13] My translation of the following passage: "Non sum sapiens et, ut maliuolentiam tuam pascam, nec ero. Exige itaque a me, non ut optimis par sim, sed ut malis melior: hoc mihi satis est, cotidie aliquid ex uitiis meis demere et errores meos obiurgare."

which one seeks to neutralize the suffering that we naturally feel both from external fatalities, such as the death of loved ones and material losses in general, and from the mistakes we make. We should never lose sight of our fallible character, which means that we will have to forgive ourselves and start over many times. The struggle between intelligence and desires for pleasures and recognition that constitute the human soul is constant, and we will necessarily stumble here and there. At a certain moment, out of tiredness or carelessness, an offense will affect us, even though we know it doesn't have that power by itself. At another moment, flattery will please us, even though we know it's false. We will fall countless times, and countless times we will have to get back up. This is part of the human condition.

Exercising Gratitude

In book I of his *Meditations*, Marcus Aurelius lists those who helped him throughout his life, citing teachers, tutors, family members, and, finally, the gods themselves. Marcus Aurelius, therefore, acknowledges the contributions of those who preceded him in the constitution of himself. We can call this an exercise of gratitude (in Greek, *eucharistia*).[14]

Plutarch, in *Life of Marius*, mentions that Antipater of Tarsus performed a similar exercise in the face of death, enumerating the graces he had in his life, including a trip he made to Athens. According to the author of *Parallel Lives*, Antipater "thought that every gift from benevolent fortune demanded great gratitude, and he kept it until the end in his memory, which is, for humans, the safest depository of blessings."[15]

[14] I thank Donato Ferrara for having drawn my attention to this exercise of gratitude in Marcus Aurelius.

[15] Plutarch, *Life of Marius*, 46.2.

Thus, it's a commendable exercise to constantly remember the gifts of fortune we receive throughout life, jotting them down whenever possible, to practice gratitude towards the Cosmos and not forget the beauty in our lives. Otherwise, we will lean towards resentment and pessimism, limiting ourselves to brood over the unpleasant facts of our existence.

Our gratitude should not be limited to the things we consider great but should also extend to the small things of daily life. There is a whole constellation of common things around us that enchant and involve us, concrete things that we experience and that, as the backdrop of our existence, we love and need without realizing it, such as water, which we generally only value when we lack it. These are things that populate our daily lives, but that we often do not enjoy because of our concerns, fears, and expectations. For example, savoring warm bread with butter and hot coffee at dawn, opening the window and feeling the breeze and the distant sound of the sea, appreciating the beauty of someone passing by on the street, playing a musical instrument at home on a summer afternoon, strolling at dusk through the garden, contemplating the sunrise. By getting used to giving thanks for both the great and the small blessings of our lives, we learn to pay attention to these things, valuing them and purifying our hearts from resentments, grudges, and sorrows, opening ourselves to happiness in all circumstances of life, both for present and past blessings.

The Vision of Wholeness (Experiencing the Divine)

Often, Marcus Aurelius practiced an exercise called "vision from above" (and which we will call here "vision of totality"), which consists of considering the things of the world as a whole, inserting ourselves as a part of the whole. Not just any part, we must emphasize, not a mere nothing (as some erroneously think), but as participants in the Divine Intelligence and also through

our bodies, ephemeral beings that accompany the sensitive flow along with other corporeal things.

To favor this exercise, we should go, whenever possible, to open and extensive places,[16] such as deserted beaches, viewpoints in the mountains, large waterfalls, or vast caves. These places enable us to perceive our physical smallness and finitude, but they also provide the experience of our capacity (which accompanies the intelligence we share with the Divinity) to sense and comprehend the totality, from our corporeal finitude to that which encompasses everything, the Cosmos. Thus, if we pay proper attention and sharpen our ears and hearts, such places will lead us to experience the Cosmic Divinity and our intimate connection with it. Seneca beautifully speaks to us about this experience:

> (1) . . . Divinity is near you, is with you, is within you. (2) Thus, I say, Lucilius, the sacred spirit dwells within us, observing our ills and goods, and [being our] guardian. As Divinity is treated by us, in the same way it treats us ourselves. No one is truly a good person without Divinity. Would it be possible for anyone to rise above fortune if not aided by Her? She gives noble and upright advice: "In each good man there dwells a god, but which god it is, is uncertain."[17] (3) If before you there appears a dense forest that blocks the view of the sky covered with intertwined branches, with ancient trees that rise to an uncommon height, this elevation of the forest and the solitude of the place and, in the clearing, the astonishment of the dense and continuous shadow will produce in you faith in Divinity. If some cave, with rocks excavated to the bottom, sustains a mountain, not built by human hands, but excavated to such an extent by natural causes, your spirit will be touched by a certain feeling of religiosity. We venerate the headwaters of great rivers; the sudden emergence of abundant waters of

[16] As editor Ulisses Trevisan aptly notes, in the impossibility of locomotion, it is possible to do the exercise lying on the ground and looking at the starry sky.

[17] Virgil, *Aeneid*, viii, 352.

> unknown provenance has altars; hot springs are honored, and a certain lake is consecrated either (4) by the opacity [of its waters] or by its immense depth.[18]

I recommend to the reader that, whenever possible, seek this experience of Divinity, reflecting on it both in your soul and in writing. Such practice, accompanied by the exercise of gratitude, purifies our hearts and opens us to a new, light, and happy life.

Vices, Virtues and Passions in Stoicism

To effectively perform the self-examination exercise mentioned above, the philosophy student must have at hand certain fundamental concepts of Stoicism. Among them, those of virtue (in Greek, *arete*) and passion (in Greek, *pathos*) stand out.

We can say that passions are our first and unquestionable reality, because it is possible to doubt the existence of things perceived by the senses, but not of emotions. Think for a moment: how could we doubt, for example, that we feel anger when we actually feel anger?

The Stoics understand passions as movements in the human soul, considering some good and others bad. In the physical sense, the good emotions make an orderly and symmetrical movement in the soul, and the bad ones produce a disorderly and chaotic movement. In the epistemic sense, emotions are the counterpart of correct or mistaken opinions or beliefs, being good in the former case and bad in the latter.

The basic idea behind this conception is the fact that the natural state of the human soul is tranquility, the absence of agitation (in Greek, *ataraxia*). Thus, a bad emotion consists of an asymmetric and irrational movement in the soul that destabilizes it and agitates it violently. The bad emotion, by its association with a false belief about reality, translates into a lack of knowledge or, in Stoic

[18] Seneca, *Letter 41—Divinity in Man.*

terminology, constitutes a vice (in Greek, *kake*). The good emotion, on the other hand, is associated with true beliefs.

The Stoics have, therefore, an epistemic conception of passions, which, according to Chrysippus, can be understood as the result of assent (in Greek, *synkatathesis*)[19] to judgments. Therefore, *fear* would result from assenting to the proposition "there is an imminent evil and it is suitable for me to avoid it" and the thing is not actually an evil; *suffering*, "there is a present evil and it is suitable for me to reject it" and the thing is not actually an evil; *appetite*, "there is an imminent good and it is suitable for me to seek it" and the thing is not actually a good; and *pleasure*, "there is a present good and it is suitable for me to enjoy it" and the thing is not actually a good. Of these, two are basic passions: pleasure and suffering, for fear occurs both from the dread of encountering what causes suffering and from losing the object of pleasure, while appetite, or irrational desire, occurs both from seeking the object of pleasure and from distancing ourselves from what causes us suffering.

The Stoics subdivided those four basic emotions in subspecies. Knowing such classification of emotions allows the philosophy student to identify their own emotions and, from this, in a process of self-awareness, perceive their epistemic flaws, seeking to eliminate them and, along with them, also eliminate the bad passions, concurrently gaining access to the good passions.

Let's now move on to the definitions, as informed by Diogenes Laertius (7.110 ff.):

- Zenonian definition (physics) of passion: "Passion itself, according to Zeno, is an irrational movement or impulse against nature or excessive drive."

[19] Assent is the action of the mind approving a representation. It is the wise person who gives assent only to a comprehensive representation (in Greek, *phantasia kataleptike*) and denies assent to a non-comprehensive representation (in Greek, *phantasia akataleptos*). Furthermore, the assent of the wise person, based on knowledge, is firm and stable, unlike the assent of the ignorant, which is unstable and weak because it is not supported by knowledge, but by mere opinion (Cf. Stob. Ecl. 2.111 = SVF 3.548).

- Chrysipian (epistemic) definition of passion: "It seems to them that passions are judgments, as Crisipus says, in his book On the passions."
- Classification of evil passions (4 main genres): suffering (in Greek, *lype*), fear (*phobos*), appetite (*epithymia*), and pleasure (*hedone*).

SUFFERING AND ITS KINDS: as we have seen, suffering is the result of erroneous assent to a proposition of the type "there is present evil and it is appropriate for me to reject it" and the object for which one suffers is not truly an evil. Here are its main kinds with their respective definitions:[20]

1. *Compassion* (*eleos*) is to suffer for those who appear to suffer unjustly. As we noted above, for the Stoics, we should not suffer with those who suffer, but rather be in solidarity with them and help them as much as possible.
2. *Envy* (*phthonos*) is to suffer for the goods of others.
3. *Jealousy* (*zelos*) is to suffer because someone else is with the one you desire.
4. *Rivalry* (*zelotypia*) is to suffer because another is with the things we think we own.
5. *Weight* (*achthos*) is to feel oppressed.
6. *Affliction* (*ania*) is to suffer from persistent and intense thoughts.
7. *Anguish* (*odyne*) is to suffer from weighing.
8. *Inattention* (*synchysis*) is a wearing suffering that hinders the understanding of present things.

FEAR (*phobos*) IS THE ANTICIPATION OF EVIL, which occurs when we give mistaken assent to a proposition of the type "there is a nearby evil and it is suitable for me to avoid it," and what is feared is not truly an evil. Here are its main species with the definitions:

[20] Based on Diogenes Laertius 7.111-2.

1. *Terror* (*deima*) is fear that produces dread.
2. *Tremor* (*oknos*) is fear of imminent danger.
3. *Shame* (*aischyne*) is fear of bad reputation.
4. *Consternation* (*ekplexis*) is fear in the face of unfamiliar things
5. *Agony* (*agonia*) is fear of something undefined.

APPETITE (*epithymia*) IS IRRATIONAL DESIRE, which occurs when we give assent to a proposition of the type "there is a good nearby and it is suitable for me to seek it" and the thing is not truly a good. Here are its main species and definitions:

1. *Lack* (*spanis*) is repressed desire.
2. *Resentment* (*thymos*) is the beginning of anger
3. *Rage* (*orge*) is an inappropriate desire for revenge.
4. *Passionate love* (*eros*) is non-virtuous love because it does not translate into friendship with beauty.
5. *Wrath* (*menis*) is aged and vengeful anger, waiting for an opportunity to take revenge.
6. *Hatred* (*misos*) is to progressively desire harm to someone.

PLEASURE (*hedone*) occurs when one assents to a proposition of the type "there is a nearby good and it is appropriate for me to enjoy it" and the thing is not truly good. Here are its main species with their definitions:

1. *Malicious joy* (*epikairekakia*) is to feel pleasure in the misfortunes of others.
2. *Perverse delight* (*terpsis*) is a soul's impulse toward weakness in relation to harmful pleasures.
3. *Wicked rapture* (*diachysis*) is the dissolution of virtue which occurs when we are swept away by something that, though it seems good, is actually evil.
4. *Enchantment* (*kelesis*) is to feel pleasure for having been bewitched through words.

All these passions are the result of assents to false judgments about things, that is, about things that are neither good nor bad, but which we mistakenly consider as such. As we have seen, through the application of the first topic, Epictetus aims to eliminate these false judgments and, concomitantly, the corresponding passions, with the third topic dealing with the rougher representations, those that deal with disturbing experiences that affect us intensely.

VIRTUES AND VICES

Bad passions are a result, therefore, of ignorance. And ignorance, in turn, is associated with vices. For the Stoics, every vice is ignorance, and to each ignorance corresponds a vice.

VICES are divided into four main genres:

1. *Imprudence* (*aphrosyne*) is ignorance about what is good, what is bad, and what is indifferent.
2. *Intemperance* (*akolasia*) is ignorance about what one should seek and avoid and what one should not seek or avoid.
3. *Injustice* (*adikia*) is to ignore what is due to each one.
4. *Cowardice* (*deilia*) is to ignore what should be feared or not.

THE REMEDY against these kinds of ignorance is wisdom (*sophia*), which is also divided into four main species:

1. *Prudence* (*phronesis*) is the knowledge of what is good, what is bad, and what is indifferent.
2. *Temperance* (*sophrosyne*) is the knowledge of what one must seek and avoid, and of what one must neither seek nor avoid.
3. *Justice* (*dikaiosyne*) is knowing what is due to each one.
4. *Courage* (*andreia*) is knowing what to fear or not.

Good Passions

These kinds of knowledge give rise to the good passions, which, unlike the bad ones, translate into harmonious movements according to the nature of the soul. The good passions are divided into three main types:

- RATIONAL DESIRE (*boulesis*), which occurs when assent is given to a proposition of the type "there is a proximate good and it is suitable for me to enjoy it" and the thing is truly a good. Its main species are: goodwill (*eunoia*), benevolence (*eumeneia*), cordiality (*aspasmos*), and affection (*agapesis*).
- CARE (*eulabeia*), which occurs when we assent to a proposition of the type "there is a nearby evil and it is suitable for me to avoid it," and what is feared is truly an evil. Its main species are shame or dignity (*aidos*) and modesty (*agneia*).
- CONTENTMENT (*chara*), which occurs when one assents to a proposition of the type "there is a present good, and it is fitting for me to enjoy it," and the thing is truly a good. Its main species are delight (*terpsis*), convivial joy (*euphrosyne*), and contentment (*euthymia*).

It is important to emphasize that the Stoics recognize the existence of these good passions, as there is a false notion that they intend to suppress emotions in themselves, becoming cold beings and pure intellects, which is neither possible nor desirable. In reality, the Stoics aim for the full development of the human through knowledge, which leads to virtuous actions and good feelings.

Note also that there is an asymmetry between good and bad passions: there are four basic kinds of bad passions and three basic kinds of good passions. Appetite or irrational desire has as its positive counterpart rational desire; fear, care; pleasure, contentment. But suffering has no counterpart, because there is no rational suffering. In fact, irrational desire, fear, and pleasure

all lead, sooner or later, to suffering, and virtue brings with it the liberation from all suffering.

Wrath

Seneca, in his dialogue *On Anger*,[21] asserts that wrath is the most dreadful and violent of all passions, a brief madness that respects nothing whatsoever in moral and emotional terms (1.1-2), for which it stands out as the most prominent among all (1.6-7), overcoming, dominating, and arousing all others (2.4-6).[22]

Furthermore, assent to anger prevents us from following our own nature, making us anti-social and brutal. Our nature, as Seneca emphasizes, in total consonance with Stoicism as a whole, is social, for we are made to help one another, not to enmity. In fact, Seneca observes, we have natural impulses to help strangers, sometimes putting our own lives at risk, while anger often prompts us to harm even those we love most.[23]

But what remedies does Seneca offer us so that we are not carried away by anger? The second book of his dialogue on this passion enumerates the available medicines for us to guard against it so that it does not seize us.

As we have seen, anger is caused by assenting to the idea that it is necessary for us to take revenge. In order for us not to do so, we need to withdraw assent from this opinion, for although certain bodily impulses precede it, it only truly occurs if we allow it,[24]

[21] In Latin: *De ira ad Novatum*.

[22] Lactantius (*On the Wrath of God*, 17.13) preserved another definition of Seneca about anger: the desire to avenge an injury which, when allowed to proceed its course, surpasses all measure. Thus, anger is the paradigmatic passion, which is why the Stoics focuses on it, mentioning, for example, the anger of Medea, which led her to kill her own children, and the anger of Menelaus, who, for having lost Helena to Paris, started a terrible war against Troy. Read, regarding this, the tragedy *Medea*, by Seneca.

[23] *On Anger*, 1.5.2-3.

[24] Just like every passion.

which is why we are accountable for our passionate actions.[25] Thus, although we cannot prevent the bodily impulse towards anger, as in the case when we are pushed by a stranger on the street or cut off by another car at an intersection, we can halt its progression, avoiding worse consequences.

Besides a good education from childhood that takes into account individual natures,[26] Seneca prescribes the following strategies to avoid anger:

First, *give time to time*, that is, count to three so that the bodily impulse of anger, that effervescence of rage we feel, calms down.[27] This step corresponds to the first stage of the representation test we previously investigated.

Secondly, *we must suspend judgment regarding the intention of the object of our anger*. For the Stoics, one of the most frequent and harmful human errors is to rush judgements, which occurs when we draw a conclusion assuming the opinion of the other without actually knowing it. Seneca notes that we are easily led to suspect and assume what others think. Sometimes, we can interpret a dry "good morning" or a certain haste to end a conversation as lack of consideration for us when, in fact, such things occur for other reasons, such as family or health problems, which is why we should not rush to judge anyone. Furthermore, if we continue to suspect, we should wait for concrete evidence before reaching conclusions.[28]

Thirdly, *we should maintain the practice of not getting angry about small and insignificant things*, such as when a child breaks a glass, a dog knocks over a vase, the wind knocks down porcelain, or someone distraught commits some folly, because the child is innocent; and the dog, the distraught person, and the forces of nature do not act with malicious intent.[29]

[25] Ibid., 2.3.1-5.
[26] Ibid., 2.18-21.
[27] Ibid., 2.29.
[28] Ibid., 2.24.
[29] Ibid., 2.25-27 and 30.

Fourthly, *we are offended by our self-esteem, that is, because we hold ourselves in high esteem and consider ourselves invulnerable*. We must instead remember that we are as vulnerable as anything else in the Cosmos. Therefore, let us not be surprised if our enemies commit hostile acts against us, or even if a friend occasionally offends us. We must take these possibilities into account. This is what we call, in Stoicism, a clause of reservation, which we can, in this specific case, define as follows: if an enemy does not attack me, or a friend, or my subordinate, or my boss, or a child, or an animal, or the forces of Nature do not do anything that opposes what I planned today for myself, the day will pass without incidents.

In fifth place, and perhaps most importantly, we need *to reflect on the always imperfect nature of humanity*. As we have said many times in this book, there is no one perfect in the world, but rather the opposite: we all make mistakes all the time.[30] As we are not invulnerable, many stones will be thrown in our direction, and some will hit us. Seneca tells us, in *On Anger* 2.7,[31] that we should leave home already expecting to encounter individuals immersed in vices: greedy, prodigal, debauched, as Seneca reminds us; indiscreet, ungrateful, insolent, scoundrels, envious, selfish, as Marcus Aurelius[32] adds. This is to be expected, for the world is full of imperfect individuals and not of the wise or saints. So, let us be prepared for whatever may happen.

We're all filled with vices. Yes, all, including the one writing to you and you who read me. As Seneca illustrates, in the crowded Campus Martius[33] there are as many vices as there are humans,[34] who, unlike other animals that are generally friendly to those who feed them, are ready to cause harm even to those who nourish them.

30 Ibid., 2.30.

31 In a passage that Marcus apparently paraphrased in his *Meditations*, 2.1. See also *On Anger*, 10.7-8.

32 Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*, 2.1

33 Historic area of ancient Rome with about 2 km².

34 *On Anger*, 2.8-9.

This state of affairs is due to the ignorance in which humanity is immersed. Humans commit against each other all possible crimes: conspiracies, betrayals, thefts, kidnappings, rapes, frauds, murders . . . The list is endless. Instead of being overcome by anger in the face of these facts, we must benevolently try to understand what leads us to carry out such unjust actions in order to extirpate their roots and, thus, contribute to a less inequitable human world.

The wise man observes humanity with benevolent eyes, without issuing fierce and irate judgments, but trying to dispel the ignorance that fosters this state of affairs, without, however, nurturing the illusion that he will be able to dissipate it completely. If he did not act in this way, the wise man would be the most unhappy of all humans, because he would never cease to be angry at the mistakes and crimes of humanity.[35]

As Seneca brilliantly synthesizes, the sage does not feel anger towards those who err, because he knows that no one is wise from birth, that we are all immersed in ignorance, and that those who have become wise over the centuries are few. The sage is aware that this is the human condition, provided by Nature itself, so he will be just in the face of errors, seeking benevolently to correct and educate all humans.[36]

The Roles We Must Assume

Another important point that the students of Stoicism must consider in their meditations is the question of the roles they play in society. What is it to be a good father or a good mother? What is it to be a good son or a good daughter? What is it to be a good brother or a good sister? What is it to be a good neighbor? What is it to be a good citizen? What is it to be a good husband or a good wife? These questions are extremely important today because we

35 Ibid., 2.9-10.
36 Ibid., 2.10.6.

live in a society that constantly drags us into such a frantic pursuit of pleasure and success that it puts aside what is actually essential in our lives. But remember that, according to the Stoics, you will neither be virtuous nor happy if you do not fulfill these roles properly. Stoicism is also beautiful in this regard, as it distances us from grandiloquent speeches, urging us to reflect on what is fundamental to human life.

Use Wisely the Time You Are Given

A reflection that must be constant in our lives is about our ephemeral character. Life is brief, which is why we must strive to accomplish everything we can for our loved ones and for the world. Only by having a deep awareness of our transience can we perceive the inestimable value of the company of those we love and of our own life. Only then will we give value to our life, and not waste it on those who have nothing to offer us and mean nothing to us. So that this lesson is engraved in our soul and so that we start to see the world through it, Epictetus recommends the following daily exercise already mentioned above:

> On each of the seductive things, which are suitable for use or which are loved, remember to say what is their nature, starting with the smallest things. If you like a clay pot, say to yourself: "I like a clay pot," because if it breaks, you will not be troubled. If you kiss your child or your wife, say to yourself that you are kissing a human being, because when they die, you will not be troubled.[37]

On the issue of making good use of the time that has been given to us, Seneca wrote a fundamental work, entitled *On the Shortness of Life*, whose argumentation we can summarize in four premises:

37 Epictetus, *Enchiridion,* 3.

1. The majority of mortals complain about Nature for supposedly having given us a brief life. However, human life is only brief if the time given is not well employed.
2. Many cry out for leisure, but do not give themselves that opportunity, as they live overwhelmed by their daily occupations.
3. Some people believe they dedicate themselves to idleness, but make their lives worse and shorter because of it, for they confuse true idleness with indulging in excessive pleasures or immersing themselves in sterile studies and empty, pedantic eruditions.
4. True leisure, dedicated to philosophic study, should elevate humanity, opening doors to understand both the world around us and the divinity that governs it.

Seneca, therefore, teaches us to manage and employ our time well. He notes that we do not have a proper knowledge of the importance of our time because it, although necessarily limited, seems infinite to us, which is why we waste it, letting it be taken from us by useless occupations, concerns, and by individuals who add nothing to our lives.

Here, it is worth making a suggestion (which I arrived at after having reflected a lot on Seneca's arguments present in this work) on how to improve your time management:

1. Make a list of the places where you spend your time during the week;
2. Reflect, then, on how this time is spent: in which places do you perceive that time is wasted uselessly, tediously, or painfully? In which places do you perceive that time is spent without any benefit, either for your spiritual development or for your mental health?
3. Having reflected on these matters, reorganize your time. Reserve portions of time for yourself, in which you will

> dedicate yourself to the reading of philosophy and reflection on your own life. Set aside hours weekly also for physical exercises, such as long walks and bike rides. Eliminate or minimize conversations that bring you nothing positive.[38] Avoid places where you perceive that your time is spent in a useless way.

These measures, although simple, have revolutionary effects on our lives. As Seneca teaches us, it is necessary that we take control of our time. Many people believe that we owe them our lives and have no scruples in taking significant portions of it from us, causing us to deal with issues that are not our concern. We need to free ourselves and return our lives to those we rightfully belong, that is, ourselves.

The student of Stoicism must constantly meditate on these two themes: the impermanence and brevity of all things and the scant nature of the time we are alowed to live, constituting a new inner discourse in their souls that leads them to live more intensely, giving more value to those we love knowing that at any moment they may be lacking to us and that each encounter with them may be the last, always fully aware of the urgency of making good use of the time that has been given to us. As Seneca tells us very well:

> Live immediately! So cries the greatest of poets[39] and, as if instructed by divine mouth, sings this salutary song: First flee, one by one, the best days of the lives of wretched mortals.[40]
>
> "Why do you hesitate," someone inquires. "Why do you recoil?" "Unless you take these days for yourself, they escape." And even while you occupy them, they still escape. So, it is certain that time must be used swiftly, just as one must also drink quickly from a torrent of water, for it does not always

[38] It is easy to perceive what they are, for you feel empty or sad after such conversations.

[39] The term in Latin is *vates*, which means seer, prophet, oracle, and, by extension, poet (see Ovid, Trist. 3.7.20).

[40] Virgil, *Georgics*, III.66 ss: " Optima quaeque dies miseris mortalibus aeui prima fugit."

> flow swiftly. This is also a beautiful way to reproach indefinite hesitation: the poet does not mention the best "age," but the best "day." Why, with such certainty, amidst such a flight of times, do you extend your months and years into a long series wherever your greed puts them? The poet speaks to you of the day, and about this very day that flees. Do you doubt that the best days always escape from wretched mortals, that is, from the busy ones, whose old age oppresses their still childish spirits, old age to which they arrive unprepared and defenseless. For no provision has been made. Suddenly surprised, they come face to face with it. They did not realize that it was approaching day by day."[41]

Everything Will Pass—So Celebrate It

An important point to be considered regarding Epictetus's Ontological Theorem is that the distinctly human element is limited to the rational soul, as this is what distinguishes us from other beings of the Cosmos. This explains why, among the things that are not under our control, Epictetus includes all external things, such as possessions, reputation, positions, and even our own bodies.

Our possessions ultimately do not depend on us, as they were not caused by us and can be taken away at any moment without prior notice. Fires, floods, earthquakes, wars, and other calamities are capable of suddenly destroying our homes, regardless of the care we take. It is possible that our savings may be stolen or reduced to nothing by a financial crisis. Positions and jobs can also be lost from one moment to the next. Here, Stoicism begins to correct the inherited ideas of common sense: we do not own external things, as they were simply loaned to us and can be requested back at any moment. This is why Epictetus emphasizes the idea that we are in the world as in an inn. Just as the objects present in a rented room, our supposed possessions are with us temporarily, never

[41] Seneca, *On the Shortness of Life*.

definitively, for they are like borrowed objects that we will return either during or at the end of our stay:

> Never, concerning anything, say that you have lost it, but rather that you have returned it. Your son died: he was returned. Your wife died: she was returned. 'Property has been taken from me': well, also, it was returned. 'But it was taken away from me by someone bad.' What does it matter by whom The One who offered it to you asked for it back? Insofar as they are given to you, use objects in the same way one takes care of something belonging to another, like travelers in an inn.[42]

This chapter, besides the idea that everything we think we have is actually borrowed, brings another harsh lesson. Those we love are also external to us, and we have no control over their future. We must, of course, take care of them in the best way possible, but this does not guarantee their safety. At any moment, accidents can happen, illnesses can strike, and they can, without warning, depart from this life.

The loss of loved ones is particularly difficult to face because the emotional bonds we create with them are so intense that we see them as the most important part of ourselves, which is why parents often sacrifice their lives for their children. Studying Stoicism implies learning harsh lessons about reality.

Some Stoics[43] consider the possibility that the souls of the wise may survive after death to contemplate the Cosmos and be absorbed in the next conflagration, but Epictetus does not even consider this possibility. For him, death is a natural part of life, and we must accept its necessity.

The fact of death also teaches us that the body bestowed upon each of us does not escape this reality common to everything in the Cosmos. My body is just one more of the objects that have been

42 Epictetus, *Enchiridion,* 11.

43 Like Seneca. See his *Consolation to Marcia*.

loaned to me. In death, I will return it to the Cosmos. And soon I will be nothing but a memory in someone's mind or a name registered somewhere. And then not even that. For some, this thought is melancholic, but not for Epictetus, who sees life as a gift given to us, for which we should be grateful, as we underlined previously[44] in Epictetus's call to reverently acknowledge the Cosmos that gave us life. This harsh lesson must be learned, we must meditate on it daily, not as if it were something morbid and sad, but as one of the facts that make life so precious and urges us to live it fully.

Friendships

In the mid-20th century, the French writer, Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, known worldwide for his book *The Little Prince*, observed in this same book that "men no longer have time to know anything. They buy things ready-made in stores. But, since there are no merchants of friends, men no longer have friends."[45] Exupéry criticized, then, the still incipient consumerism of his time as something that alienated humans from friendship.

A similar assertion had already been made in the West about 2,400 years ago by Socrates. In fact, we read, in the *Memorabilia* of Xenophon, that Socrates claimed "most men, as far as he could see, did not concern themselves with acquiring friends. They strove to acquire houses, fields, slaves, cattle, and furniture of all kinds, and they strove hard to maintain what they had. But to obtain for themselves the greatest of all blessings, as they admitted to be a friend, or to maintain the friends they already possessed, not one man in a hundred ever concerned himself."[46]

Thus, Socrates and Exupéry say practically the same thing, with an interval of thousands of years. However, we can say that, in

44 When addressing the Topic of judgment or desire.

45 Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, *Le petit prince*: "Les hommes n'ont plus le temps de rien connaître. Ils achètent des choses toutes faites chez les marchands. Mais comme il n'existe point de marchands d'amis, les hommes n'ont plus d'amis" (my translation from the French text).

46 Xenophon, *Memorabilia*, 2.4. Version from the English translation by Henry Graham Dakyns.

Antiquity, friendship was much more important, in ethical terms, than it is today. It was, then, a relationship that supposed mutual duties, very close to the current relationship between siblings, which made reflection upon it an essential point of ancient ethics.

A clear proof of the importance of this is how much of relevance on the subject was written in those times, and how little is written about it nowadays. What is friendship and what is a friend? What types of friendship exist? What qualities should a friend have? What qualities should we possess to have friends? How to differentiate a friend from one who only pretends to be one? What are the appropriate actions in relation to a friend? These are the questions that the ancient Greeks and Romans sought to answer in their treatises on ethics.

So, for example, Marcus Tullius Cicero, in his *On Friendship* (viii, 26-27), tells us that friendship supposes a natural impulse that exerts a mutual power of attraction between those who will become friends. Without this impulse, friendship simply does not happen.

Seneca, on the other hand, reflects as follows on friends according to the usefulness of Aristotle's classification:

> Someone obtained a friend with a view to help escape from prison; when the chain first rattles, [the friend] will withdraw. These are the friendships that people call 'temporary'; whoever was taken as a friend because of usefulness will please only as long as they are useful. Therefore, a crowd of friends sits around the prosperous; around the ruined there is solitude, and friends flee from there when they are tested. As for this, so many abominable crimes are examples, of those who distance themselves out of fear, of others who abandon out of fear. It is necessary that beginning and end be harmonized with each other. He who begins to be a friend because it is advantageous, also ceases to be one because it is advantageous. A reward

> will be more appealing than a friendship if the benefits of the reward are more satisfying than the friendship itself.[47]

In the same letter, Seneca defines true friendship:

> Why do I exert myself to obtain a friend? So that I may have someone for whom I can die, someone to follow into exile, whose death I may oppose and prevent. This thing that you describe, which approaches what is advantageous, what is expected to yield something to gain, is commerce, not friendship. Do not doubt that love possesses something similar to friendship: that affection can be called a frenzied friendship. Does anyone love for the sake of profit? Does anyone love for the sake of ambition or glory? Love, itself, indifferent to all other things, inflames the spirits with a desire for beauty, not without hope of mutual tenderness. And then the cause of what is worthy forms an alliance with base affection.[48]

But how to distinguish the sincere friend from the flatterer and the manipulator? Both in Antiquity and today, we need to reflect and differentiate between those who approach us out of natural attraction as well as a sincere desire for friendship and those who see us as a means to achieve social and financial goals. Furthermore, it is essential for us to distinguish sincere praise from false praise, as well as to learn from the criticisms of our adversaries and enemies, who see us with eagle eyes, so that we can use them as yet another means for self-awareness and for our moral progress.

Thus, the exercise of meditation must include a reflection on our friends and acquaintances. They value us. They assist us in the pursuit of a virtuous and happy life. They approach us animated by sincere feelings of admiration and affection. Stoicism is a search for reality, but often we avoid facing a reality that contradicts our expectations. This applies to friendships, to marriages, to many

47 Seneca, *Moral Letters to Lucilius*, 9 ("*On Philosophy and Friendship*"), 8-9.
48 Ibid., 10,

important things. Often, it seems to us that a compliment is false. Is it really? Observe more carefully. Do not rush to judgment. Other times, a friend seems not to care about the issues you are going through in your life, but only about what you have to offer them. Sharpen your ears. See if this is really the case. Try to discover who your true friends are. They will not be the ones who say "I love you" left and right, but they will be those who objectively contribute to making your life better and fuller. Check your representations. Often, they bring truths that you cannot yet accept, that you do not have the strength to admit. Once you have discovered the truth, do not linger. Do not, out of fear of loneliness, stay with those who do not love you. The world is big. The Cosmos is benevolent. Create paths for yourself. Stoicism will help you on this journey. Have a good life.[49]

49 For further insight, see: Dinucci, A. *Epictetian Considerations on Friendship, Opinion, and Disagreement*. In: *Philosophical Perspective Review*, v. 47, p. 1, 2020.

APPENDIX

Glossary

absence of suffering (*apatheia*): absence of bad passions, characteristic of a virtuous soul.

according to nature (*kata physin*): what is in accordance with reason.

adequate actions (*kathekonta*): actions according to nature and virtue performed according to knowledge of what is good and what is bad.

appetite (or irrational desire, *epithymia*): bad passion whose opposite is rational desire (*boulesis*).

assent (*synkatathesis*): act by which veracity is attributed to a representation (*phantasia*, see below) or to an assertible (*axioma*, the proposition of Stoic logic).

capacity of choice (*prohairesis*): a concept of Aristotelian origin that, for Epictetus, cannot be externally constrained or determinated.

caution (*eulabeia*): good passion contrary to irrational fear (*phobos*).

CONFLAGRATION (*ekpyrosis*): providential movement by which the demiurgic fire devours all things, reducing everything to itself and renewing the Cosmos like the Phoenix bird reborn from ashes.

CONTENTMENT (*chara*): good passion opposed to irrational pleasure (*hedone*), one of the four passions.

COSMOS (*Kosmos*): result of the providential movement of the demurgic fire (*pyr*, see God), which, after the conflagration (*ekpyrosis*, see above), constitutes itself as a living being composed of body and soul, whose body is the sum of all bodies made of water and earth, and whose soul is the sum of all souls made of fire and air (see pneumatic substance below).

COURAGE (*andreia*): knowledge of what one should fear or not, one of the four cardinal virtues, the others being prudence (*phronesis*), temperance (*sophrosyne*), and justice (*dikaiosyne*).

COWARDICE (*deilia*): vice contrary to the virtue of courage (*andreia*).

DECORUM (*aidemosyne*): for Epictetus, one of the main human virtues. For the Stoics in general, one of the species of temperance (*sophrosyne*).

DIRECTIVE CAPACITY (*hegemonikon*): fragment of the divine intelligence that resides in the human soul consisting of of pneumatic substance (*pneuma*, see below), and capable of thinking.

DIRECTIVE FACULTY (*hegemonikon*): sometimes referred to as rational soul, grants humans assent, judgment, and the capacity to interpret their representations (see concept above).

ETHICS (*ethike*): the Stoics subdivided ethics into the studies of impulse, good and bad things, passions, virtue, end, primary value, and appropriate actions.

FREEDOM (*eleutheria*): quality of one who is not externally determinated nor internally impeded.

GOD (*Theos*): for the Stoics, the demurgic fire (*pyr*) that shapes and fundamentally constitutes reality, establishing causal networks as Providence (*Pronoia*) and as Destiny (*Heimarmene*), being identified with Zeus (or its Roman equivalent, Jupiter) and with the set of gods of the Greco-Roman pantheon.

GOOD AND BEAUTIFUL (*kalos*): adjective related to the human who has achieved the virtuous state of soul.

GOOD FLOW OF LIFE (*euroia biou*): for the Stoics, the soul flows incessantly from the heart towards all parts of the body. When the soul is virtuous, this movement is harmonious and good, for the soul is in a state of *euroia*.

HAPPINESS (*eudaimonia*): state of blessedness, of fullness. In the primary sense, disposition in which the individual is filled with divine spirits.

HUMAN BEING (*anthropos*): living being that holds within itself a fragment of divinity (the guiding capacity, see above), which grants it consent, judgment, and the ability to know the world (that is, to interpret its representations (*phantasiai*, see above).

IGNORANT (*apaideitos*): a human individual uninstructed in philosophy.

IMPRUDENCE (*aphrosyne*): vice contrary to the virtue of prudence (*sophrosyne*).

IMPULSE (for action, *horme*): action of the soul directing itself towards something. If the impulse is excessive, it is irrational, which is why it is necessary to soften and balance it.

INDIFFERENT (*adiaphoros*): what in itself is neither good nor bad, but is material that can be well or poorly used, that is, all external things, including our bodies.

INJUSTICE (*adikia*): vice contrary to the virtue of justice (*dikaiosyne*).

INTEMPERANCE (*akolasia*): vice contrary to the virtue of temperance (*sophrosyne*).

IRRATIONAL FEAR (*phobos*): a bad passion that has rational care (*eulabeia*) as its counterpart.

IRRATIONAL PLEASURE (*hedone*): passion, the opposite of contentment (*chara*).

JUSTICE (*dikaiosyne*): the knowledge about the part due to each one, one of the four cardinal virtues, the others being prudence (*phronesis*), temperance (*sophrosyne*), and courage (*andreia*).

NATURE (in Greek, *physis*; in Latin, *natura*). In the macrocosmic sense, the rational nature of the world. In the microcosmic sense, the rational nature of humans.

ONTOLOGICAL THEOREM: distinction between what is under our charge (*eph'hemin*, see above) and what is not under our charge (*ouk eph'hemin*), by which we restructure our entire value system.

OPINION (*dogma*): belief to which one gives assent or not and which must be tested so that we withdraw assent if it proves false or confirm it if it proves true.

PASSION (*pathos*): movement of the soul that can be bad (when it consists of excessive movement in the soul related to assent to a false proposition), or good (when it consists of the opposite).

PHILOSOPHICAL PRINCIPLES (*theoremata*): demonstrations underlying all virtues that must be studied and put into practice.

PHILOSOPHY (*philosophia*): for the Stoics, the study of divine and human things, which are fundamentally divided into three

parts: ethics, physics, and logic, seen as constituting an organic whole, like an animal, whose bones and tendons are the logic, whose flesh is the physics, and soul, ethics.

PHYSICS (*physike*): for the Stoics, physics encompasses the studies of cosmogony and cosmology.

PNEMATIC SUBSTANCE (*pneuma*): mixture of air and fire that determines what each thing is in the Cosmos, possessing four basic degrees: the physical structure (*hexis*), the vegetative soul (*physis*, which enables the growth of plants), the animal soul (*psyche*, which gives animals the ability to obtain representations and to be propelled by them), and the rational soul (*hegemonikon*, which gives humans, in addition to the capacities of psyche, assent and judgment).

PROGRESSER (*prokopon*): for the Stoics in general (from middle Stoicism onwards), both the student of philosophy and the teacher are *prokopon*, that is, someone who progresses, for the ideal sage (the one who has absolute knowledge about good and evil, not possessing in his soul any false opinion) never occurs in reality, but only people who approach this ideal, like Socrates who incessantly recognize their ignorance regarding true knowledge.

PRUDENCE (*phronesis*): knowledge about good and bad things. The main cardinal virtue of the four, the others being justice (*dikaiosyne*), temperance (*sophrosyne*), and courage (*andreia*).

RATIONAL DESIRE (*boulesis*): good passion opposed to irrational desire (*epithymia*).

REPRESENTATION (or impression, *phantasia*): result of the interaction of thought with perception, whereby the soul assesses what has affected it. Representation, in general, has a perceptual content (the sensory data received by the senses) and an

axiomatic content (the evaluation that thought makes about what has affected it). In the psychophysical sense, every representation is an alteration of the soul.

SELF-MASTERY (or self-government, *enkrateia*): virtue emphasized by Xenophon, in *Memorabilia*, developed through exercises of mental and physical strengthening, which remained relevant for the Stoics.

SOUL (in Greek, *psyche*; in Latin, *anima*): a term that, in Stoicism, can refer to the soul of animals that do not possess the capacity for assent, or to the directive faculty (*hegemonikon*, see below), the rational soul proper to humans.

SUFFERING (*lype*): passion without rational counterpart.

SUPPOSITION (*hypolepsis*): the same as opinion.

TEMPERANCE (*sophrosyne*): knowledge of what should be endured or not, one of the four cardinal virtues, the others being prudence (*phronesis*), justice (*dikaiosyne*), and courage (*andreia*).

TRANQUILITY (*ataraxia*): absence of agitation in the soul, proper state of a virtuous soul.

VICE (*kakia*): absence of knowledge about virtues resulting in an unbalanced soul and unhappiness.

VIRTUE (or moral excellence, in Greek, *areté*; in Latin, *virtus*): For the Stoics, virtue constitutes the sole human good in the strict sense of the word, consisting primarily of knowledge about good and bad things.

WHAT IS UNDER OUR CHARGE (what depends on us, what is under our control, *eph'hemin*): a concept of Aristotelian origin resumed by Musonius and Epictetus, in which it refers to the proper activities of human directive capacity: opinion (*dogma*) or supposition (*hypolepsis*), impulse (*horme*), assent

(*synkatathesis*), and, in general, the rational use of representations (*phantasiai*, see below).

WISDOM (*sophia*): term that the Stoics use in various senses, sometimes relative to prudence (*phronesis*), sometimes relative to the knowledge of virtue as a whole. Knowledge with which one makes good use of all external things.

WISE (in Greek, *sophos*; in Latin, *sapiens*): human ideal or divinity itself; one who possesses perfect knowledge about virtues.

Quotes to Memorize and Live By

From Gaius Musonius Rufus

- You do not live the day that dawns beautifully without proposing it as the last (Frag. 22).
- Why do we accuse tyrants when we have already become worse than they are? For we possess similar impulses in different fortunes (Frag. 23).
- If pleasant things are measured by pleasure, nothing is more pleasant than moderation. If things to be avoided are measured by pain, nothing is more painful than incontinence (Frag. 24).
- It is the height of shamelessness to remember the body's weakness concerning the ability to endure labors, but to forget completely the same weakness concerning the ability to endure pleasures (Frag. 25).
- Grasp a noble death while it is possible: a little later, it may not be within your power to die, and a noble death may no longer be possible (Frag. 28).

- You will earn respect from everyone if you first begin to respect yourself (Frag. 30).
- Do not wish to prescribe appropriate actions to those who know that you practice inappropriate actions (Frag. 32).
- We will declare the treasures of Croesus and Cinyras as extreme poverty. We will consider only one person to be rich: the one who, wherever he is, is capable of maintaining himself without needing anything (Frag. 34).
- Since death is equally destined for all, happy is the one who dies not late, but with distinction (Frag. 35).
- This is the greatest action of Nature among all: to combine and harmonize the impulse with the representation of what is appropriate and useful (Frag. 40).
- It is of extremely sordid and foolish men to think that we will be contemptible to others if we do not harm our greatest enemies in every way. We say that contemptible is also conceived as incapable of causing harm, but it is much better to conceive it as incapable of being beneficial (Frag. 41).
- Rufus used to say: "If you have enough free time to praise me, I am not saying anything [useful]." Then he spoke in such a way that each of us, sitting, thought that someone had once denounced him. In this way, he perceived the events. In this way, he placed each one's evils before their eyes (Frag. 48).
- If you do something noble with suffering, the suffering passes, but the nobility remains. If you do something shameful with pleasure, the pleasure passes, but the shame remains (Frag. 51).

From Epictetus

- He who is discontented with the present and what he has received from fortune is an ordinary man in life. But he who

endures things with nobility and makes good use of what comes from them is worthy of being considered a good man (Frag. 135).

- At a banquet, when we are invited, we take what is placed before us. And if someone ordered the host to offer him fish or cake, it would seem extravagant. In the Cosmos, we ask the gods for things they have not given us, among the many they have indeed given us (Frag. 15).
- The sick become irritated with the doctor who gives them no advice and think they have been abandoned by him. Why would someone not act the same way towards the philosopher and likewise think they have been abandoned by him in relation to wisdom, for not telling them anything useful? (Frag. 17).
- Those with good physical condition endure heat and cold. Likewise, those who well dispose their soul endure anger, sadness, great joy, and other emotions (Frag. 18).
- If you attack someone with inflexibility and threats, remember that you are civilized and that, by not acting in a savage manner, you will live without regret and without having to account for it (Frag. 71).
- It must be understood that an opinion would not easily help a person if each day he did not speak and hear the same things and, at the same time, did not practice them in life (Frag. 78).
- When governor, Agrippinus tried to persuade those he condemned that the condemnation was in their best interest. "Not as an enemy nor as a thief," he said, "do I pass sentence against them, but as a caretaker and guardian. In the same way, a doctor encourages and persuades the one being operated on to cooperate willingly" (Frag. 23).
- As Epictetus said, you are a small soul carrying a corpse (Epictetus, Frag. 176; Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations* 4.41).

- The struggle is not for something trivial, but for sanity or madness (Epictetus, Frag. 177; Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations* 4.41).
- It is more necessary to care for the soul than the body, for it is preferable to be dead than to live badly (Frag. 92).
- If someone exceeds the limit, the things that produce the most delight become those that produce the least delight (Frag. 55).
- No one is free who is not master of himself (Frag. 114).

From Lucius Annaeus Seneca's De Brevitate Vitæ (On the Shortness of Life)

- Life is sufficiently long and has been generously given to us for the accomplishment of the greatest actions, if it is entirely well invested. But when it is dissipated by lust and negligence, when it is spent on nothing good, only at the end, compelled by the ultimate necessity, do we feel that we did not perceive it passing (chap. 1).
- Those possessed by vices are never allowed to return to themselves. If by chance a moment of tranquility occurs, they are agitated, just like the deep sea, where even after the winds have ceased, turbulence remains. Their desires do not grant them rest at any moment (chap. 2).
- The following indignation of certain men is very senseless: they complain about the disdain of their superiors, who are not available to receive them! Will someone dare complain about the pride of another who is never available to himself? (chap. 2).
- Humans do not tolerate their properties being occupied by anyone, and if there is a small dispute about their boundaries, they resort to stones and weapons; however, they allow others

to invade their lives. Worse: they themselves introduce their future possessors (chap. 3).

- You live as if you were to live forever, never considering that you are fragile, not realizing how much time has already passed; you waste time as if it came from a full and abundant source, while, in the meantime, precisely that day, which is given in favor of some person or thing, may be the last (chap. 3).
- You will hear many saying: "At fifty I will retire to leisure, at sixty I will abandon my public duties." And what guarantee do you have, after all, that you have been allotted such a long life? Who will allow things to proceed as you plan? (chap. 3).
- One must live one's whole life learning, and, what may cause you the greatest surprise, one's whole life is a lesson in how to die (chap. 7).
- It is characteristic of a great and eminent man, one who is above human errors, not to allow any part of his time to be taken away, which is why his life is extremely long: because all the time he had at his disposal was entirely reserved for himself (chap. 7).
- But he who devotes all his time to his own use, who plans each day as if it were the last, neither longs for nor fears tomorrow. What new pleasure is there that any moment can offer? All are known. All have been enjoyed to the full. Let Fortune plan the rest: life is already secure (chap. 7).
- There is also no reason to think that someone has lived simply because they have gray hair or wrinkles: they have not lived for a long time, but merely existed for a long time. For what reason do you think someone has sailed much if a fierce storm hit him upon leaving the port, and he was tossed about by the furious winds from various directions

and driven in circles around the same point? He did not sail much, but was much tossed about (chap. 7).

- The most precious thing of all is being played with. It is not realized because time is something immaterial, because it does not appear to the eyes, which is why its value is greatly underestimated, considered almost worthless (chap. 8).
- No one will give you back your years. No one will restore them to you again. Life follows the course it began and does not go back or halt its course. It will not slow down or diminish its speed: it will flow silently. It will not become longer by the order of a king, nor by the favor of the people. It will proceed in the manner it was determinated on the first day (chap. 8).
- Life is divided into three periods: what was, what is, and what will be, of which the present is brief, the future uncertain, and the past certain, for Fortune has lost its rights over this last one, as it cannot return by any decision (chap. 10).
- The busy lose the past because they have no leisure to look back at things past and, even if they do, the recollection of the things they suffered is unfortunate (chap. 10).
- The present time is very brief, to the point that it is seen as nothing by some. It is always in motion, it flows and rushes. It ceases to exist before it comes into being. And it is not noticed that it delays, just like the world or the stars, whose constant and restless agitation never allows rest anywhere (chap. 10).
- Among all men, only those who have time for wisdom are at leisure, only they live, for they are not only good guardians of their lifetime, but also take for themselves all the ages. However many years have passed before them, they add to their own. Unless we are very ungrateful, these brilliant men of sacred opinions were born for us, they prepared our lives (chap. 14).

- We are accustomed to saying that it is not within our control to choose our parents, that by chance we were given to humans. But in truth, we are free to be born according to our own will. Philosophers are from the family of the most noble spirits: choose into which family you wish to be welcomed (chap. 15).
- The condition of all the busy is indeed miserable. However, among them, the most miserable are those who do not even work for their own occupations, those who sleep someone else's sleep, those who walk at someone else's pace, those upon whom the freest things of all are imposed: to love and to hate. Here, if they wish to know how short their lives are, let them reflect on which part of those lives is truly theirs (chap. 20).

From Marcus Aurelius Antoninus' Meditations

- Pursuing the impossible is the nature of fools [...] (5.17).
- Death is the rest from sensory reaction, from the instinctive impulse that moves us like puppets, from the evolution of thought, from the tribute imposed on us by the flesh (6.28).
- Return to yourself and reanimate yourself, and as soon as you have come out of your dream and understood that you were disturbed by nightmares, once awake again, look at these things as you looked at those (6.31).
- He who has seen the present has seen everything: that is, how many things have arisen since eternity and how many things will remain until infinity. For everything has the same origin and the same aspect (6.37).
- What does not benefit the hive, does not benefit the bee either (6.54).

- How many men, who were very celebrated, have already fallen into oblivion! And how many men who celebrated them have long since departed (7.6).
- Do not be troubled by the future; for you will meet it, if necessary, with the same reason that you now use for present things (7.8).
- Dig within yourself. There is a wellspring of good within, and it is capable of continually flowing if you do not stop digging (7.59).
- Continually, and if possible, at each idea, apply the science of nature, the science of passions, and dialectic (8.13).
- Do you want to be praised by a man who curses himself three times every hour? Do you want to please a man who does not please himself? Does a man please himself who regrets almost everything he does? (8.53).
- Men were born for each other. Teach them or bear with them. (8.59).
- Things remain static outside of us, enclosed in themselves, without knowing or judging anything about themselves. Who then knows them? Reason. (9.15).
- If some man has made a mistake, the harm is in him. But perhaps he has not erred (9.38).
- Something that happens, from eternity, was already preordained for you. And everything that happens to you comes from the chain of causes (10.5).
- What is suitable for each person is what the nature of the universal whole contributes to him, and it is suitable precisely at the moment when nature contributes it to him (10.20).
- Have I accomplished something useful for the community? Or have I only served myself? Always reflect on these two ideas to help you persevere in goodness (11.4).
- What is your profession? To be a good man [...] (11.5).

- Socrates called the beliefs of the common people the scarecrows of children (11.23).
- Expel negative judgments and you will be free. Who is stopping you from doing this? (12.25).

Prayers and Thoughts on Religion

- The plea of the Athenians: "Send us rain, send us rain, beloved Zeus, upon our fields and meadows!" Either it is unnecessary to pray, or it must be done thus, with simplicity and spontaneity (Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*, 5.7).
- What must we do, both in public and in private, except celebrate in song, praise God, and render justice to His graces? Shouldn't we, while plowing, sowing, and eating, sing a hymn to God? "Great is God, who granted us these instruments with which we till the earth; great is God, who gave us hands, who gave us the ability to eat, who gave us the stomach, who gave us the ability to grow without realizing it, who gave us the ability to breathe while we sleep!" We must sing a hymn about each of these things, and the best and most divine hymn because God gave us the ability to understand them and, through that understanding, the ability to use them. And then? Since many of you are blind, is it not necessary for someone to fulfill this role and sing the hymn to God for all? For what else is an old, lame man capable of but singing a hymn to God? If I were a nightingale, I would sing the songs of the nightingale. If I were a swan, I would sing the songs of the swan. But as it is, I am a rational animal. I must sing a hymn to God. This is my work. I will fulfill it. I will not abandon this post that has been given to me. And I invite you to join in this same ode! (Epictetus, *Discourses*, 1.16.15-20).

- You do a great thing, and I greet you if, as you write, you persevere in progressing towards a sound mind. How foolish it is to ask the Immortal Gods for what you can obtain for yourself. Hands should not be raised to the heavens, nor should one implore the temple guardian to allow us to reach the ear of the statue, as if we could be better heard; the Divinity is near you, it is with you, it is within you. Thus, I say, Lucilius, a sacred spirit dwells within us, observing our evils and goods, and being our guardian. As the Divinity is treated by us, so it treats us. No one is truly a good man without the Divinity. Could anyone rise above fortune unless helped by It? It gives noble and righteous counsel: *In each good man dwells a god, but what god it is, is uncertain*. If a dense forest presents itself to you, obstructing the view of the sky with intertwined branches, with ancient trees that rise to an uncommon height, this elevation of the forest and the solitude of the place and, in the clearing, the awe of the dense and continuous shadow will produce in you faith in the Divinity. If some cave, with rocks carved deep, supports a hill, not built by human hands, but carved to such an extent by natural causes, your spirit will be pierced by a certain feeling of religiosity (Seneca, *Moral Letters to Lucilius*, 41).
- A bad soldier is one who follows the commander while groaning. Therefore, let us, filled with zeal and diligence, receive orders and not desert the course of this most beautiful work to which whatever we will have to endure has been intertwined. And in this way, let us exhort Jupiter, whose governance is the order of this vastness, in the same manner that our Cleanthes exhorts him through more than eloquent verses, verses which I am permitted to translate into our language, following the example of Cicero, the most eloquent of men. If they please you, you will approve them; if they

displease you, you will know that here I followed the example of Cicero:

> *Lead me, O Supreme Father and Lord of the World,*
> *To wherever you will; no obstacle will hinder me from following you.*
> *Diligently, I will be at your side.*
> *And, if I do not wish to,*
> *I will endure reluctantly what I could do willingly.*
> *Fate leads those who obey it and drags those who resist.*

Let us live thus, let us speak thus; let destiny find us ready and diligent. Behold the elevated spirit that entrusted itself to fate. And, in opposition to it, the weak and degenerate, who fight against and misjudge the order of the world and prefer to correct the Gods rather than themselves. Farewell. (Seneca, *Moral Letters to Lucilius*, 107).

- Lead me, Zeus, and you too, Fate, to the post to which I was once assigned, and I will diligently follow you and if, becoming bad, I do not want to, I will still follow you. (Epictetus)

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